# THE MORAL IMAGINARY
# IN
# SAUL BELLOW'S FICTIONAL LANDSCAPE

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C. KANNAN

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CALICUT
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**DR. N. RAMACHANDRAN NAIR**
***M.A., M.Sc.,Ph.D.***
*Head of the Department*
*Member, Calicut University Senate*
*Member, Calicut University Academic Council*
*Chairman, P.G. Board of Studies*
*Ex-officio Member, U.G. Board of Studies*

**UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT**
**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH**

E-Mail eng@unical.ac.in
Fax (0494) 400269
Phone Office (0494) 400284
PBX (0494) 401144 (9 lines)
Etn.259
Residence (0495) 302343

*CALICUT UNIVERSITY P.O*
*MALAPPURAM DISTRICT*
*673635 KERALA INDIA*

***Date 20-04-2001.***

# CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled *The Moral Imaginary in Saul Bellow's Fictional Landscape*, submitted to the Calicut University, for the award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English is a record of bonafide research carried out by the candidate under my supervision. No part of the thesis has been submitted for any other degree before.

Dr. N.Ramachandran Nair

(Supervisor)

*Dr. N. RAMACHANDRAN NAIR*
*Professor & Head*
*Dept. of English*
*University of Calicut - 673635*

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## DECLARATION

I, C. Kannan, hereby declare that this thesis has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma, associateship, fellowship or other similar title or recognition.

Calicut. **C.Kannan**

20-04-2001.

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Calicut University,

20-04-2001. **C.Kannan**

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## ABBREVIATIONS USED

| | |
|---|---|
| *DM* | *Dangling Man* |
| *V* | *The Victim* |
| *AM* | *The Adventures of Augie March* |
| *SD* | *Seize the Day* |
| *HRK* | *Henderson the Rain King* |
| *H* | *Herzog* |
| *MSP* | *Mr. Sammler's Planet* |
| *HG* | *Humboldt's Gift* |
| *JB* | *To Jerusalem And Back* |
| *DD* | *The Dean's December* |
| *A* | *The Actual* |

## SAUL BELLOW (1915--)

### Chronology

10 July, 1915. Saul Bellow was born in Lachine, Quebec, Canada. With the Immigrant Russian Parents (Abraham and Liza) he spent his boyhood days in an old section of Montreal.

1924. Moved with his family to Chicago. Spent his time in the libraries.

1933-35. Educated at the University of Chicago.

1935-37. Bachelor's degree from Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois. Graduating with honors in Sociology and Anthropology. Married Anitha Goshkin, a social worker (divorced). One son. Gregory.

1938-42. Worked for the Works Progress Administration, preparing biographies of Midwestern novelists and poets.

1941. First work *Two Morning Monologues* published.

1943-46. Member of the Editorial Department—Encyclopaedia Britannica. Worked on the *Great Books* project.

1944. *Dangling Man*(Vanguard) published. Served in the United States Merchant Marine.

1946. Taught English at the University of Minnesotta, Minneapolis.

1947. *The Victim* (Vanguard).

1948. Awarded Guggenheim Fellowship. Travelled to Rome and Paris.

1948-49. Assistant Professor of English, University of Minnesota.

1950-52. Visiting Lecturer, New York University.

1952. National Institute of Arts and Letters Award. American Academy grant.

1952-53. Creative Writing Fellow, at Princeton University, New Jersey.

1953-54. Member of the English Faculty of Bard College, Annadale-on-Hudson, New York. *The Adventures of Augie March* (Viking) received the National Book Award.

1954. Associate Professor of English, University of Minnesota.

1955-56. Awarded Guggenheim Fellowship.

1956. *Seize the Day* (Viking). Married Alexandra Tschacbasov (divorced). One son, Adam.

1959. *Henderson the Rain King* (Viking).

1959-61. Awarded Ford Foundation Grant. Visiting Professor of English, University of Puerto Rico, Rio Piedras.

1960. Recipient of the Friends of Literature Fiction Award.

1960-62. Co-Editor of a literary publication *The Noble Savage.*

1961. Married Susan Glassman. One son, Daniel.

1962. Professor Committee on Social Thought, University of Chicago. Northwestern University conferred an honorary degree. (Doctor of Letters)

1963. Honorary Doctor of Letters conferred by Bard College.

1964. *Herzog* (Viking). A play, *The Last Analysis* opened on Broadway. James L. Dow Award.

1965. National Book Award for *Herzog. The Last Analysis* (Viking) Prix International de Litterature.

1966. Three one act plays entitled *Under the Weather (Out From Under, A Wen, Orange Souffle)* performed in London.

1968. *Mosby's Memories* (Viking). Jewish Heritage Award. Professor on the Committee on Social Thought at the University of Chicago. Awarded the French Croix de Chevalier des Arts et Lettres.

*1970.* *Mr. Sammler's Planet* (Viking).

1971. National Book Award for *Mr. Sammler's Planet.*

*1975.* *Humboldt's Gift* (Viking).

*1976.* *To Jerusalem and Back.* Awarded Nobel Prize for literature "for the human understanding and subtle analysis of

contemporary culture that are combined in his work." Pulitzer Prize for *Humboldt's Gift.*

1977. Neil Gunn International Fellowship.

1978. Brandeis University—Creative Arts Award. Gold Medal of Honor from the National Arts Club.

1981. Delivers the Tanner Lectures at Oxford University.

1982. *The Dean's December* (Harper).

1983. *Him with His Foot in His Mouth and Other Stories.*

1987. *More Die of Heartbreak.*

1988. Receives the National Medal of Arts.

1989. *A Theft.*

*The Bellarosa Connection.*

1990. National Book Foundation Medal for his distinguished contribution to American letters.

1991. *Something to Remember Me By.*

1994. *It All Adds up.* (Viking).

1997. *The Actual: A Novella* (Penguin).

# PREFACE

Saul Bellow (1915- ), the Nobel Laureate's fictional landscape is an interpretation of the modern psyche. The postmodern sensibility envisaged is familiar to the present context. As an intellectual writer, he tries to register an acute awareness of the metaphysical dimension of the modern human existence. Paradoxically enough, his creative sensibility does not appreciate and entertain the prevailing literary climate of dark pessimism and nihilistic despair. He emerges as a spokesman for the humanistic ideals and positive virtues honoured by tradition.

The present study, *The Moral Imaginary in Saul Bellow's Fictional Landscape* examines the projections of moral values, images of morality and emotive overtones in Bellow's select novels, and is based mainly on *Henderson the Rain King* (1959), *Herzog* (1964), *Mr. Sammler's Planet* (1970), and *Humboldt's Gift* (1975). These novels represent three distinct categories of Bellow's craftsmanship.

The dissertation enumerates in six chapters the range of Bellovian sensibility in the present literary climate. The introductory chapter *The Aesthetics of the Bellow Canon and the Postmodern Sensibility* examines the general aspects of the Bellow canon foregrounded against the modern literary sensibility. A brief review of the earlier works done in the

area of the proposed project is presented as a prelude to the present study intending to investigate Bellow's complex and challenging vision of life. The latter part of the introductory chapter exemplifies the concept of the 'moral imaginary' and the terminology is elaborated further. The epithet 'moral imaginary' is a neologism and is synonymous with the vision of life. This positive vision of life asserts the primordial human values. It connotes Bellow's world view which is interwoven with realism, revelation, spirituality, transcendence and the artist motif. Amidst the conflict between values and desires, trust in man emerges as an epiphanic revelation. The Lacanian notion of the 'imaginary' as "the world, the register, the dimension of images, conscious or unconscious" (Sheridan, 1977: ix) lends a valid complex dimension to the 'moral imaginary' in the Bellovian fictional landscape.

The second chapter *Quest of the Picaro Hero and the Rituals of Life and Death* sets out to show the symbology, the psychological depth and mythic intensity in the novel, *Henderson the Rain King* (1959). A sort of deliberate intellectualisation makes this work a comic parody of modern fiction. With a fabulous anthropological frame, it belongs to the Adventure Novels of the 1950's.

The third chapter, *The Psychic Odyssey of the Estranged Protagonist,* deals with Bellow's most intellectually challenging novel, *Herzog* (1964), a survivor novel with deviant fictional patterns. I examine Bellow as a psychological novelist with a rare gift to scrutinize the man in conflict.

In chapter IV, *Transcendence and Portrait of an Artist as a Quester,* we see how in the transcendentalist, novel *Humboldt's Gift* (1975), Bellow cleverly manipulates the balancing of success–failure theme. With metafictional possibilities, through Citrine's quest for transcendence, Bellow has presented the myth of the survival of an artist and the dangers of celebrity. Society is engaged in a flight from humaneness. The moral outlook of an individual is dwarfed by the superstructures of an essentially technological society.

The next chapter entitled, *Tiresian Vision of the Holocaust Victim,* analyses *Mr. Sammler's Planet* (1970), classified as a survivor novel of the 1960's. It is a direct attack on the western civilization with the Tiresian vision of the septuagenarian protagonist as the central consciousness. Another specific objective is to examine how the historical experiences act as memory. As technique and theme, memory is juxtaposed with the present actualities.

In the concluding chapter, *From Disorder to Harmony and Reconciliation,* a summing up is done to show hows Bellow's fiction directly evinces ideological breadth and emphasizes the significance of humanism and compassion which are fast disappearing from the present day world.

A serious interpretation of the structure of contemporary human experience is presented in the fictional cosmos with technical nuances and thematic complexities. This dissertation attempts to bring out Bellow's 'vision of life'—a vision which emphasizes the significance of human compassion. Though explicit moral doctrine is conspicuously absent in Bellow's novels, human life in modern society is perceived as a sacred one. Bellow does not approve of overt projection of any ideology by an author. In an interview with David D. Galloway of *Audit Poetry* Bellow clarifies:

> We must be in a rather sad position when we expect novelists to supply us with the ethical statements which should properly be offered by society, by firm ideas of right and justice. But in our great need for consolation we seize upon every utterance of every writer and examine it for auguries of good or evil. The result is that a great burden is thrown upon the

> writer, who is asked to feel himself a prophetic personality.(1963:22)

To the Bellow hero, life in society is neither frustration nor disaster. The proposed study seeks to prove that as a moralist, Bellow insists on the theme of social amelioration and wants to consider human life livable and lovable. He is directed more towards human concerns and asserts that humanity has not reached its end though individuals have to carry their loads of failures, confusions, humiliations, losses, errors and shame.

# Chapter I

## The Aesthetics of the Bellow Canon and the Postmodern Sensibility

Chronologically postmodern and temperamentally traditional, Saul Bellow's fiction assimilates various ideational patterns from diverse disciplines like philosophy, psychology, anthropology, sociology and history. Born on July 10, 1915 in Lachine Quebec Canada, as the son of immigrant Orthodox Jewish Russian parents, this out and out Chicagoan spent his early childhood in one of the poorest and ancient districts of Montreal. Joseph Epstein comments on the coalescence of different languages at an early stage, which had a formative influence on him. "Saul Bellow grew up in an intensively verbal environment. Three languages were spoken in the household-English, Yiddish and French, with a little bit of Hebrew thrown in for good measure" (1977:48).

He was educated in the Chicago schools and graduated from Tuley High School, entered the University of Chicago in 1933. He was transferred to Northwestern University in 1935 and got graduated with honours in Sociology and Anthropology in 1937. Greatly exposed to academic atmosphere and a conglomerated American society with different ethnic and variegated cultural aspects of several races, Bellow's observations have the tenor of a detached observer's comment. Living a

life intimately in touch with immigrant experiences and deeply immersed in the complexities of modern America, Bellow felt and experienced a sense of alienation. As an intellectual writer, he tried to interpret and formulate a realistic view of the Jewish American context.

Bellow's writings register a moral vision, which is an integral part of his Jewish outlook. The Bellovian Diaspora and the Jewish tradition indicate the Jewish grounding and directly points to a new literary movement. The entry of Jewish writers into the American fiction resulted in direct and disguised documenting of the belief in the Jewish doctrine. It constitutes a new literary movement and the predominance of Jewish writers and intellectuals in American letters was clear even in the wake of this century. The Jewish American fiction constitutes a new aesthetic sensibility and it has the significance of a social movement with literary consequences. The distinctly Jewish quality of Bellow's fiction has made Irvin Howe to consider Bellow as the "most serious and the most Jewish in his seriousness" (1981: vii).

An understanding of the Jewish culture, tradition, social context and thought are essential to appreciate and evaluate the Jewishness in the American Jewish writers. The Hebraic world view evolved from the Judaic teachings and the uniqueness of Yiddish culture together form a sort

of cultural backdrop. Ultimately, these factors render a unique power and charm to the Jewish American writings. The rich tradition brought with the immigrants – the tradition of literary creations and scholarship helped them to develop a Jewish sensibility. They had emerged from a way of life conditioned and formulated by Biblical and Talmudic preaching.

The greatness of Bellow's writings is not because of the Jewish tenor alone. It is only an aspect of a wider and greater Bellow canon. The circumstances that led to Jewish entry into American mainstream are very complex. Mark Shechner points out two significant historical conditions.

First, the Jews came to America as they were emerging from a traditional way of life that stressed the rigorous spiritual authority of the Bible, the moral authority of an extensive legal and ethical code, contained in the Talmud and its commentaries and the democracy of learning. The general correlation between class and learning that characterized most western cultures through the end of the last century never held true for the Jews; despite their own crushing poverty, the immigrants brought with them a rich tradition of literacy and scholarship and the beginning of a secular fiction that needed only translation into modern terms to gain entry into American writing. (Hoffman, 1979:193).

The second point is that of the great immigration which itself was the expression of a cultural revolution. Jewish novelists are the most acclaimed writers in America since the Second World War. They could establish a literary domination with greater literariness, challenging the already established Anglo-Saxon tradition and the existing American stance. Though the post-war era has seen eminent writers like Saul Bellow, Norman Mailer, Isaac Bashevis Singer, Philip Roth, and Bernard Malamud, it was between 1945 and 1955 that Jewish writers in America came forward as the spokesmen of an influential modern literary saga.

According to Earl Rovit, "the first of the American Jewish writers to capture a large audience without departing from an American Jewish idiom, Bellow has been instrumental in preparing a way for other writers like Bernard Malamud, Isaac Bashevis Singer and Philip Roth " (1967: 5).

A shared sense of loss and disaster became the major thematic concerns of postwar Jewish writers. Along with this issues there are the characteristic modern themes like conflict between the private self and the outside world, war, brutality, alienation, quest, depression and unemployment. They tried to probe deeper into the aspects of Jewish heritage, way of life, philosophy and sensibility. They were all attuned to

the modern political history and the political realities of the contemporary world often preoccupied their mind. A plethora of books by Jewish American writers appeared during this period, and it witnessed an American Jewish literary renaissance which ultimately generated the formulation of a modern secular Jewish imagination and "Bellow presents a consistently Jewish philosophical view which is all pervasive in his works"(Cronin, 1992: 53).

Saul Bellow is essentially a Jewish writer who delves deep into the workings of the Jewish American mind. Historical and social victimization were the strongly registered major concerns of the earlier Jewish American writers like Abraham Cohan and Henry Roth. Along with Bernard Malamud, Philip Roth and Delmore Schwartz, Bellow also tried to project the disoriented, alienated and displaced wanderers in his novels. In the modern context, the traditional Jewish view of life helped to formulate an independent and strong alternate vision based on the present American predicament. Now they have become spokesmen for all men and declare that the paradoxes perceived in the Jewish history is not restricted to a single group.

Commenting on the thematic concerns of Jewish American writers, Malcolm Bradbury points out:

> It was the Jewish writers, with their sense of traditional alienation and exile, their profoundly relevant witness to the recent holocaust, their awareness of the inadequacies of an older liberalism that could not cope with what Reinhold Neibuhr called 'the ultimately, religious problem of the evil in man', who concentrated the spirit of the necessary imagination.(1982:28)

The Jewish tradition and background—the Bellovian Diaspora was analysed by major critics including Alfred Kazin. Commenting on the 'earthly city of the Jews', Alfred Kazin points out that most of Bellow's characters are Jews. "There was a natural, enchanted repetition of the Jewish neighbourhood, the Jewish family circle, the Jew as college intellectual, radical, dreamer, explorer of low life—the Jew discovering worlds new to him" (1971:127).

Bellow's first novel, *Dangling Man* (1944) written in the form of a diary by a Chicagoan named Joseph is a psychological study. Though the protagonist is not mentioned as a Jew, Irving Malin treats him as "an archetypal Jew who, like Sholom Aleichem's characters considers existence in ambivalent ways" (Vinoda, 1983: 48).

In his sense of family he expresses Jewish sentiments and appears as a typical Jew. Bellow's philosophical indebtedness to Judaism is analysed by L.H. Goldman while Martin Buber in *Hasidism and Modern Man* tried to establish how Jewish faith is essentially life affirming. According to the Jewish cult, it is impossible for Man to approach the divine by reaching beyond the human. The individual has to become human and should approach Him only through fulfilling his destined act for what he has been created. Herzog has this fundamental Jewish belief that his life is precious, valuable and has a purpose.

*The Victim* (1947) tells us of a few days in the life of Asa Leventhal a young Jewish professional who fosters the notion of a blacklist against all Jews. "The agonizing equivocal relations of Jew and Gentile" (Hart, 1986: 41) is another theme projected in the novel.

*The Adventures of Augie March* (1953) deals with the picaresque adventures of young Chicago Jew constantly haunted by the unpleasant memories of a miserable childhood. Irving Malin considers *Seize the Day* (1956) as a powerful Jewish work which tries to scrutinize the tensions of Jewish life.

There is no consistent method or strategy in Bellow's treatment of Jewish philosophy, Jewish life and Jewishness. Bellow often masquerades

Jewishness in other forms and hides Jewish elements. Even in *Henderson the Rain King* (1959) Bellow offers a different view of the Jewish theme and the vision is indirect and "it lies hidden in the flaming love expressed throughout the novel" (Vinoda, 1983:55).

The prophetic passion of Bellow's fiction is exemplified best in *Herzog* (1964) and in *Mr. Sammlers's Planet* (1969). Moses Herzog is a middle aged Jewish intellectual hailing from an immigrant Yiddish culture. He belongs to the tradition of Talmud hakhem—the life long student. Even the name Moses Herzog has deeper connotations and Louis D. Rubin suggests that "Herzog is directly in the line of great Biblical prophet and the lawgiver, Moses of the medieval sage Maimonides, and of the eighteenth century scholar and philosopher Mendelssohn" (Shivkumar, 1981: 37).

The specific Judaic strain in the novel places Herzog in the Hebraic poetic tradition. A deep unconscious commitment to Jewish faith could be deciphered in his mental jottings. He feels that a great responsibility rests on him and is fighting for a divine cause.

The Jewish faith is antithetical to the despair oriented ideologies and this makes Bellow to put an inordinate faith in the value of human

existence. This essential Jewish faith can be encapsulized as Life Affirming.

Jewishness is only one of the factors which makes Bellow's novels great and he himself does not entertain the nomenclature of Jewish American writer. The greatness and strength of the Bellovian fiction is not because of the Jewish tenor alone. It is only one facet of a wider and greater Bellow canon.

*Mr. Sammler's Planet* (1970) is more direct in its attacks on western civilization and this septuagenarian protagonist's disinterestedness elevates him to the stature of a prophet. Being a holocaust victim with experience of death and suffering, he emerges as a totally new individual—a man with a new and changed consciousness. Hana Wirth-Nesher and Andrea Cohen Malamut have focused on the basic tenets of Jewish life embodied in the novel. "*Mr. Sammler's Planet* is Bellow's most Jewish novel because it deals directly with the most important events of Jewish history in this century—the Holocaust, the State of Israel and the American Jewry's relation to both" (1979: 61).

Jonathan Wilson's analysis of Bellow's fiction concentrates on the fictional and ideological breadth. He catalogues the major characters as frustrated, angry and intelligent searchers for the new vistas of life. The

Bellovian fiction abounds with a cavalcade of protagonists exposed to conflicts, discontentment and ambivalent relationships. Through the unpleasant and repulsive aspects of the normal human existence in the modern era, as an affirmist Bellow categorically campaigns against violence and murder. To the Bellow sensibility, the utopian world of harmony, restrain and order represent an aspect of serene culture. "Unable to express his anger and unable to secure the amount of love that he wants, the Bellow hero is almost perversely convinced that violence is a sin and love imprisoning" (Wilson, 1985: 21).

*To Jerusalem and Back* (1976) reveals Bellow's political vision, and it deals with his visit to Israel. One could observe his deep concerns regarding Israel's peculiar situation in the Middle East. His instinctive sympathy for the suffering Jews is evident, but in his personal account of the visit, Bellow is mute on many theoretical issues of the holocaust.

Stephen L. Tanner developed his critical ideas focusing the religious vision. In *More Die of Heartbreak* (1967) "Bellow has combined a rich diversity of images and motifs to convey a religious vision which, while playfully eclectic, is best identified as a version of religious existentialism" (Cronin, 1992: 284).

Bellow's societal attitudes to women and depiction of the female situation are dealt by feminist critics. Ada Aharoni points out the preponderance of male narrators in Bellow's narratological framework and comments on the lack of intellectual complexity and emotional depth in the female characters. But this observation regarding the female situation may be based on the perspective of the Jewish male world view. Though the strained relationship with the female world appears as a recurrent concern, there are convincing sensitive feminine graces that try to redeem and console the suffering males.

Critics like Malcolm Bradbury observes the disintegrating forces of the American city life interrelated with other themes. The degenerative forces cum features of the urban dwellers in the American context are given an aesthetic dimension.

> As a novelist he (Saul Bellow) encounters an urban, mechanical massed world-in which the self may be ironized, displaced or sapped by dominant processes and the laws of social placing, where victimization is real, and the assertion of self and the distillation of an act of will or a humanistic value is a lasting problem. (Bradbury, 1982: 25)

Too much freedom often confuses the protagonist to select a definite course of action in life. The internalized conflict presented through Joseph in *Dangling Man* (1944) appears externalized in *The Victim* (1948). Chirantan Kulshrestha stresses the problem of affirmation in *The Victim* and comments on the relation between Asa Leventhal and Kirby Albee—Jew versus Gentile.

> The problem that confronts the protagonist in *The Victim* corresponds precisely to the general and widespread crisis that threatens man today. Uprooted from his racial bearings and unsure of his religious faith, the individual can no longer derive meaning from a social structure that is indifferent to him and suppresses human values. (1978: 63)

Modernist fiction is a reaction against the nineteenth century realism and deeply influenced by symbolic poetry and poetics. There is a general tendency among the novelists to develop from a metonymic (realistic) to a metaphoric (symbolic or mythopoeic) representation of experiences. Bellow's novels stand at the centre of the contemporary enquiry into the possibilities of the novel— an enquiry visible in the novelists who emerged at the wake of the century. The style and technique are to be analysed against the background of the contemporary European writing.

Bellow was thoroughly familiar with the stylistic experiments going on both in England and America. One objective of the present study is to identify the narrative strategies used to shape Bellow's vision of life.

Bellow's experimentation in style and technique ranging from the episodic mode of confession in *Herzog* (1964) to the neo picaresque in *The Adventures of Augie March,*(1953) and the primitive motif in *Henderson the Rain King* (1959) are examples for the contemporary enquiry into the possibilities of the novel.

The growth of the cult of antihero is mainly due to the deviation in the pattern of human thought currents. Philosophical and social fascinations of the century include a metaphysical preoccupation of existentialism, the worries about loss of meaning and identity in the modern society and the resultant changes in sexual, moral and cultural standards that have contributed to the growth of the cult of antihero. The methods adopted to portray the antihero varies from the modernist technique of viewing the consciousness, psychic states, fleeting sensations and concealed emotions of the antihero. While the hero's acts are sanctified by the society, the antihero's deeds are justified by himself. Occasionally he has the realization that injustices are inescapable part of

the modern existence and ultimately he is forced to struggle with his environment and community.

Cityscape depiction often evokes an eerie atmosphere, which forms a backdrop to the unpleasant human experiences and disquieting dilemmas. *The Dean's December* (1982), Bellow's first novel since he won the Nobel Prize begins with a very "powerful evocation of Bucharest in winter" (Wilson, 1985: 30).

Albert Corde, like Mr. Sammler witnesses the indecent vulgarities and crimes of a sophisticated urban life. The chaos, clutter and theatricality depicted through the urban picture may well be placed against the pastoral environment and idyllic situations in certain works. Molly Stark Weiting analyzing the symbolic function of the Pastoral accounts how "*The Adventures of Augie March,* Bellow's first long novel, represents his first attempt to incorporate actual pastoral episodes" (Cronin, 1992: 86).

The theme of the Protagonist versus Society was analysed in my M Phil dissertation. In that I attempted to affirm the social responsibilities of the protagonists whose actions were often sanctified by the society. Modern society consists of various agencies, and the protagonists may be distracted by various forces. But in their encounter with reality, they

accept and acknowledge the cherished customs and respected values of society. The complexity of the present world experience and civilization demand new responses from the individuals. The denigration of human life in society is an aspect of dark pessimism and hence Bellow takes a centripetal flight from the glorification of the wasteland theme.

The world view of a writer can be evaluated with reference to the dimensions of images in the fictional scape in relation to morality. The complexities of life situations are perceived as the moral stance and attitude towards a physical reality, which is society, itself. This attitude or point of view is recognizably vivified with various modes and techniques. Narrative strategies and the narrator's voice used to solidify the vision are innovative literary tactics. Tony Hilfer commenting on postmodernism and the American Fiction points out: "The affective relation of reader to protagonist that centers the reader's moral response in traditional realism is absent..." (1992:11).

Imagined world of a writer abounds in visions and formative influences. In the realistic representation of human experiences, the reader often recognizes and identifies the experience in the fiction as his own. Though this is a traditional mode, even in the modern context there is a sort of subsumed realism achieved through the imaginary vision of the

reader. Lacan draws out the differences between the Imaginary, the Symbolic and the Real.

> Of these three terms, the 'imaginary' was the first to appear, well before the Rome Report of 1953. At the time, Lacan regarded the 'imago' as the proper study of psychology and identification as the fundamental psychical process. The imaginary was the world, the register, the dimension of images, conscious or unconscious, perceived or imagined. In this respect, 'imaginary' is not simply the opposite of 'real'. The image certainly belongs to reality and Lacan sought in animal ethology facts that brought out formative effects comparable to that described in 'the mirror stage'. (Sheridan, 1977: ix)

If we draw out a difference between the Symbolic and the Imaginary, the Symbolic for Lacan is "referred to the structures of Language and discourse, as when a child begins interpreting his or her experience in terms of the categories and schemata appropriated during language acquisition and thereby constructs stable identities" (Douglas, 1989: 26).

Lacan's triangular schematization of orders as the Symbolic, the Imaginary and the Real, points out the mind's capacity to formulate an aesthetics of interpretation. Experiences represented through the complex system of language are interpreted and explored to analyse the vision projected in a work of art. "The world we live in exists only in interpretations. Every object of knowledge is already part of a pre-interpreted context and beyond that are only other pre-interpreted context" (Tarnas, 1993: 396).

Experiences of the protagonists help the readers to formulate a philosophy, which does not directly originate from the writer's intelligence. A reader recognizes this concept after various stages of apperceptions. The immediate response of the reader to the fictional cosmos is like the Lacanian 'mirror stage' in which the privilege is only to get veiled faces. "Indeed, for the imagos whose veiled faces it is our privilege to see in outline in our daily experience and in the penumbra of symbolic efficacy—the mirror image would seem to be the threshold of the visible world" (Lacan, 1966: 3).

The symbols banked upon to establish 'the moral imaginary' in Bellow's fictional landscape are partly concrete and partly spiritual and transcendental. Realisation of the truth about themselves enables

Henderson, Herzog, Sammler and Citrine to accommodate in a hostile society. Henderson evolves as a chastened and reborn hero. He confronts the concrete images of the dark forces, which help him to master the points of 'beyond'. Herzog's self realisation transforms him into the garb of a resurrected seer. After witnessing the scene of tenderness and love, Herzog appreciates the conversion of Gersbach into an embodiment of a tender buffoon. Almost all Bellow protagonists testify the pragmatic approach to life and above all trust in man.

The diverse philosophical strains formulated may be investigated and enumerated incorporating two stages of interpretations—the symbolic and the imaginary. Depending on the aesthetic sensibility and the intellectual interests of the reader, he looks for completed patterns of images, symbols and themes. Commenting on the types of literary interest, Wayne C Booth observes. "The author creates, in short, an image of himself and another image of his reader, he makes his reader, as he makes his second self, and the most successful reading is one in which the created selves, author and reader, can find complete agreement" (1961: 138).

Wolfgang Iser stresses the twin participation of the author and the reader in the assemblage of literary meaning. Commenting on the act of

*konkretisation* he points out the two poles of a literary work—the artistic pole to denote the author's text and the aesthetic pole to ascribe the reader's aesthetic realisation of the text. The text offers various perspectives to the reader according to his imagination and often formulates a train of images and this varies from individual readers.

According to Paul De Man, literature is not just a "definite unit of referential meaning that can be decoded without leaving a residue" (1979: 4).

Major thematic concerns operate as signifiers and they are actually reflections of the '*imaginaire*' of the interpreter or the addressee. These evocative gestures acquire the dimension of major concerns of the writer. Projections of moral values, images of morality and emotive overtones in the fictional landscape ultimately emerge as the vision of life embedded in the artifice. The fascinating enormity and interlinking of the mental images leave their impressions in the reader's mind. These specific images present a series of discourses and a spectrum of perceptions. Inferences are drawn from the narrative and the chain of mental images transports the interpreter to a realm of aesthetic complacency. The reader's creative process with various stages like sensation, imagination and intellection contributes to the sensuous experience. The images or the

vision projected is a reflection of the imaginaire. These images or signs are forms of mental images and is the result of the union of the signifier and the signified.

> As we syntagmatically follow a narrative, we keep on mentally accumulating images which interact with other related forms. The manifest patterns of the narrative are presented like the slowly evolving images in a carpet. In the beginning we perceive only partial images or contours whose complementary forms appear later. (Gill, 1994: 3)

Freud views a creative artist as an egoistic daydreamer whose imagination is neither controlled by reason nor by intellect alters and disguises reality. (1985:141). But critics like Norman Holland "started examining the text not as evidence of the author's psychology but as scene of the collusion between the author and the reader. The reader discovers in the text a secret expression of what he desires to hear" (Sethuraman, 1989:32).

The tripartite theory of Freud mainly focuses on the human consciousness. The triadic mode of thinking postulated by Lacan is based on the systematic and scientific study of the unconscious already realized

by Freud. Commenting on Lacan's philosophical re-reading of Freud, Leonard Jackson observes:

> Lacan takes an extreme position on the Freudian ego, Freud gave the ego the valuable function of negotiating with external reality. Lacan sees the ego as the product of misrecognition and false objectification in early childhood. The child, for Lacan, goes through a 'mirror phase' of development (recognized neither by Anna Freud nor Melaine Klein, nor I think, by any pediatricians outside the Lacanian School). It then first learns to recognize itself, or at least imagine itself, through its reflection, as a unitary being. The ego remains an imaginary entity. (i.e. one existing in fantasy) which is in turn the agent of misrecognition and false objectification later on. Lacan is directly opposed to these schools of analysis which take it as a goal of analysis to strengthen the ego and to improve adjustment to external social reality. (1991: 98-99)

From the sociological perspective, the moral vision and moral life are conditioned by a particular culture and social milieu. Literary texts are products of ideologies and insights, and as such they try to unravel the

maze of human existence. The moral codes foregrounded through figuration along with the inherent vision of the artist help us to perceive this ideology.

> Nowadays, of course, we are all of us trained to believe that the moral life is in ceaseless flux and that the values, as we call them, of one epoch are not those of another. We even find it easy to believe that the changes do not always come about gradually but are sometimes quite sudden. This ready recognition of change in the moral life is implicit in our modern way of thinking about literature. (Trilling, 1972: 2)

As a part of the communicative strategy a writer shows the real world of experience in an imagined world and attempts to familiarise the humanistic strain. Though the novelist's role is different from that of a social scientist or a historian, he often tries to enrich our perspectives of politics, society, class struggle, cultural conflict and moral values. Morroe Berger considers fiction as a social science and analyses how the writer communicates through authorial commentary. "Since art is thus embedded in social life, art is neither unworthy of nor beyond philosophical consideration, and a sociology of art is both possible and useful" (1977: 8).

The creative role of the interpreter results in drawing out inferences, and viewpoints. Opinions expressed and attitudes reflected by a writer are his conscious views which may be negated and questioned by the reader. The vision of an artist is evolved by an incessant interaction with an increasing critical enquiry. Though the aesthetics of moral concerns is not developed as a creed in the modern critical canon, art cannot exist by ignoring the humanistic element. Charles Lemert explains the term 'imaginary' as "the complex of means whereby a society, or social group, unconsciously represses intolerable feelings, facts and histories such as the reality of differences, associated with the ideas of Jacques Lacan and his followers" (1977: 66).

Society often evolves its view of the world based upon values, beliefs, rules and moral codes. These views are structured and enumerated in literatures by means of symbolization or through linguistic devices. An author's viewpoint is always conditioned by a particular vision. This formation of a vision of life may be purely as a result of intellection. In the formation of a vision of life, various philosophical ideas, and historical cum social milieus converge. Saul Bellow's vision becomes a conglomerated one as it denotes a synthesis of diverse philosophical and intellectual ideas.

The moral visions are formed after a series of stages, which pertain to experience and observation. Most of the ideas fabricated and categorised emerge through images and symbols.

With technical innovations, and a coherent vision of life, Bellow's novels have a philosophical dimension with the message of humanistic ideals. This brighter and optimistic aspect of human life with hope, faith, confidence and promise are part of a moral vision influenced by Jewish outlook. The despair oriented ideologies and dark pessimism are antithetical to the Jewish faith which is essentially life affirming. The philosophical vision patterned in the Bellow novels exemplifies his inordinate faith in the value of human existence. There is an attempt to construct a system of thought structure tracing the boundless glory of amelioration and reconciliation. Projections of moral values, images of morality and emotive overtones in Bellow's fictional landscape ultimately emerge as 'the moral imaginary'—the vision of life.

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# Chapter II

## Quest of the Picaro Hero and the Rituals of Life and Death

With an anthropological frame and an extravagant mythography, *Henderson the Rain King* (1959) combines elements of romance, comedy, adventure and legend. Bellow analyses the basic questions regarding the tension between life and death. A mythic space forms the background and ideas from psychology, the Bible and philosophy are blended. There is a leaning towards fabulation and the novel is not so cerebral as *Herzog*1964.

Eugene Henderson is a modern American trying to escape from a cursed culture. It is with the urge to seek the wisdom of lifethat heembarks on a fabulous trip to "the ancient bed of mankind" (*HRK*,39).John Jacob Clayton observes that Henderson, "decides to find salvation not in civilization, but in the primal savage state: he leaves his wife and goes to Africa" (1968: 166-167). While *Herzog* (1964) is structured on the psychological odyssey, *Henderson the Rain King* (1959) concentrates on the physical journey, which results in redemptive experience. "The novel is created as an outward map of his (Henderson's) psychic terrain" (Bradbury, 1982:60).

The quixotic ritual quest is further motivated by the preliminary dissatisfaction with the contemporary American entrapment. The world around suffocated him with its excesses. Society appeared as a mad prison house from which everyone wanted to break away. " There is a curse on this land!" (*HRK*,36). A thoroughly disappointed Henderson shrieks aloud. This metaphysical urge was accelerated with the strong desire to burst his spirit's sleep. But paradoxically enough, Henderson, after the quest in the African wilderness returns to the same community from which he tried to move away. The novel culminates in a positive affirming note as the protagonist recoils to reality. He is ready to reconcile and has completed the process of inner transformation and partial salvation. This romantic coming back to the community is suggestive of his spiritual recovery. Henderson is transformed into a successful spiritual explorer from the status of a geographical adventurer. "Henderson's trip to Africa is also a parody of the Conradian voyage into the heart of darkness" (Goldman, 1983:107).

*Henderson the Rain King* can be considered to have a narrative structure consisting of three distinct phases. The expository first part (Chapters I to IV) is the American Section with details of the picaro hero's early desperate life and the background of an exodus. This section depicts

Eugene Henderson, the gentile American multimillionaire as a victim suffering from a strong sense of nonbelongingness and anxiety. The paraphrasable content of the narration is the quest of the picaro hero and the rituals of life and death as a part of it. The quest is basically for salvation, a part of Bellow's moral vision. And the actions have the "context of fantasy to create and sustain the moral concern" (Detweiler, 1967-68:405). The second phase of the narrative (Chapters V to IX) centers upon Henderson's sojourn at the matriarchal Arnewitribe. His spiritual regeneration starts from this place which is out of space and time. " Instead of the heart of darkness Henderson finds the 'heart of light' in the Arnewiland" (Kim, 1994:91).

The third section of the novel (Chapters X to XXII) accounts Herderson's Wariri adventures. He was exposed to a series of ordeals. His experience under King Dahfu helps him for a resurrection. Henderson's fear and anxiety of death are alleviated and feels a deep sense of ecstasy. A fresh zeal for life makes him to reconsider his relation towards family and society. The novel finally narrates the refined protagonist's reentry into civilization.

Why does Henderson decide to set out for Africa? Like Lord Buddha, before the attainment of enlightenment, Henderson

relinquishes everything in an odious existence. He walks towards the road of salvation and hopes that the African Safari may be a panacea for the spiritual frustrations. It turns out as a search for meaning amid a life of plenty. He tried to divert this inner call of the spirit by indulging in activities like abusing close friends and relatives. He could not resist the inner voice. Henderson confesses: "Well, I've always been like this, strong and healthy, rude and aggressive and something of a bully in boyhood; at college I wore gold earrings to provoke fights and while I got an M.A. to please my father I always behaved like an ignorant man and a bum" (*HRK*, 23).

He reviews the American scenario and reveals the motives behind the symbolic quest. "Things got worse and worse and worse and pretty soon they were too complicated" (*HRK*, 7). His turbulent domestic world, violent impulses, suicide threats and the "ceaseless voice in the heart that said, *I want, I want, I want, oh, I want – yes, go on" (HRK*, 14) made Henderson to confess – "I've had my belly full of trouble" (*HRK*, 18). Obsession with the fear of death, excessive self love and thirst for experience are the other factors which tormented him. "I am a badluck type. I am a jinx, and death hangs around me" (*HRK*, 262). An uneasy disturbance in his heart forces him to declare: "Nobody truly occupies a

station in life any more. There are mostly people who feel that they occupy the place that belongs to another by rights" (*HRK*, 32). Henderson is uneasy with the fabulous family inheritance. "I am rich. From my old man I inherited three million dollars after taxes" (*HRK*, 7). But he feels that it does not actually belong to them. "My ancestors stole land from the Indians. They got more from the government and cheated other settlers too, so I became heir to a great estate" (*HRK*,22). Henderson also entertains the notion that he has taken the illegal position of his brother Dick who was drowned in the wild mountains. Along with frustrating memories he is troubled by a sense of guilt.

Inspite of all the comforts in life, he could not feel a 'belongingness' to the main stream of life. The world around seems to be a mighty oppressor and the uneasiness converts him into a virtually displaced and disoriented individual. Bellow deliberately presents Henderson as a coarse outsider quite different from his other Jewish protagonists. Henderson is a Gentile, free from problems like alimony, court litigations and compensation. Still he shares the sense of dissatisfaction and 'nonbelongingness' of the Jewish characters.

The imagery associated with 'pressure' and 'weight' indicates Henderson's burdened life experience. His very physical structure with

great weight "Six feet four inches tall. Two hundred and thirty pounds. An enormous head, rugged, with hair like Persian lamb's fur" (*HRK*, 8) actually corresponds to the vastness of the geographical area where he is exposed to trials. This external vastness of the physical structure is in perfect harmony with spaciousness and convulsions in his mind. Jeanne Braham comments on the geographical vastness of Africa, which symbolically represents Henderson's physical structure and psychic realm.

> His (Henderson's) story is one of expansive exploration; His large and robust wife, Lily, the monumental queen Willatale, the magnificent King Dahfu, and the shining lion are all emblems for Henderson's own spaciousness. Africa itself, with its primitive cadences, its vast expanses, its urgencies, its rages, its droughts, its mysteries and uncharted regions, its unpredictable changes, mirrors Henderson's own physiognomy and interior. (1984:47)

Apart from these, Henderson carries the weight of 'inheritance' along with the cultural weight. Bellow presents him as, "A millionaire, several times over, six feet four inches in height, weighing two hundred and thirty pounds, socially prominent, and a combat officer holding the purple Heart and other decorations" (*HRK*, 78). Physical deformity is a recurrent

imagery in Bellow fiction. While Sammler is pictured as a one eyed observer, here Henderson is hard on hearing on the right side. Kyung, Ae Kim points out that "In addition to the inner voice, interestingly, Henderson has a defective right ear. This is suggestive of his spiritual deafness to the needs of the inner voice" (1994:86). His body, though "built like an old locomotif" (*HRK*, 73) is "a regular bargain basement of deformities..."(*HRK*, 73).

He is at war with society, his own family and to make matters worse, with his own self. "Now I have already mentioned that there was a disturbance in my heart, a voice spoke there and said, *I want, I want, I want!* it happened every afternoon and when I tried to suppress it, it got even stronger" (*HRK*, 24). Henderson is ruled by a multi-dimensional death obsession and death-ridden vision. He is often forced to receive the message of death. A strange experience in an aquarium at Banyules testifies this:

> I looked in at an octopus, and the creature seemed also to look at me and press its soft head to the glass, flat, the flesh becoming pale and granular – blanched, speckled. The eyes spoke to me coldly. But even more speaking, even more cold, was the soft head with its speckles, and the Brownian motion

> in those speckles, a cosmic coldness in which I felt I was dying. The tentacles throbbed and motioned through the glass, the bubbles sped upward, and I thought, "This is my last day. Death is giving me notice." (*HRK*, 20)

A turning point in Henderson's life that initiates him into the quest trip is the death of the family cook Miss. Lenox. "Her literal death paralleling the spiritual death which Henderson has been experiencing" (Porter, 1974:132) forces him to apprehend the ultimate reality of death. He wants to avoid the reality of it. In his violent act of shooting a cat, the servant was frightened to death. "During my rage her heart had stopped" (*HRK*, 36). Death becomes a never-ending relay race in Henderson's life. It precipitates a metaphysical pain making him traumatic. In an ironic tone Henderson recounts "So Miss Lenox went to the cemetery, and I went to Idlewild and took a plane" (*HRK*, 38). His search for spiritual salvation commences and "with Romilayu as his guide, playing Virgil to Henderson's Dante, he (Henderson) leaves Charlie and his wife and descends into the ageless interior of Africa" (Porter, 1974:132).

As a punishment for the death of the cat and the servant, Henderson becomes instrumental for the ritual slaughtering of the frogs at the Arnewiland. Further, the same person becomes a dumb witness to the

shrieking death of his reality instructor King Dahfu of the wariri tribe. "... the king's death has hurt me too much. I am stricken, can't you see, Romilayu? I am stricken down and I can't function at all" (*HRK*, 264). In the troubled life, Henderson has been running away from reality. He was chasing illusions and his acceptance of reality was necessitated partly by the death of Dahfu.

It is his deep longing for immortality that makes Henderson to fear death. Bellow in an interview with Nina Steers makes it clear that "Henderson is seeking a remedy to the anxiety over death. What he can't endure is this continuing anxiety, which most of us accept as the condition of life which he is foolhardy enough to resist" (1964:38). His quest in the novel is to find a remedy to this anxiety over death. As a part of the quest he encounters various situations and different mythic personages. From their tutelage he acquires the wisdom of life which prepares him for salvation. Confrontation with death at various stages enables Henderson to have a spiritual regeneration. In the remote African plateau, this visitor from western culture is entertained first by Itelo and later by Dahfu. They had a common trait also. "This Prince Itelo of the obscure cattle tribe on the Hinchagara plateau had attended a mission school in Syria and so had

his Wariri friend" (*HRK*, 56). Henderson recognizes the peculiar wisdom of the tribals.

The experience in the Arnewiland, especially from the Queen Willatale culminates in the beginning of Henderson's transcendence. "Look what this Queen Willatale had done for me – read my character, revealed the grun-tu-molani to me" (*HRK*, 76). He receives abundant love from the primordial African queen; which was absent in his family life and in the metropolitan American context. The primordial Arnewiland in the dark continent is specifically depicted against a background of light images. "The boulders sat like lumps of gold in the dusty glitter" (*HRK*, 43) and "smoke went up in silent radiance"(*HRK*, 43). "Inanimate glitter came off the ancient thatch" (*HRK*, 43). They were "brittle, porous, and light; they seemed like feathers"(*HRK*, 43). The first act of Henderson to please the children of Arnewi too results in creating light and warmth. "...immediately a bush went flaming almost invisible in the strong sunlight" (*HRK*,44). Though Kyung Ae Kim considers "the light trick" (1994:91) as an "absurd self dramatization" (Kim, 1994:92) and a "comic farce" (Kim, 1994:92) it anticipates the illuminating self-discovery of the hero apart from the Bibilical parallelism. Corresponding to the

sparkling radiance of the village Henderson's mind also is illumined. Willatale tells him the secret to lead the best way of life.

"Henderson's quest for salvation is prompted by meeting queen Willatale. On seeing her, he intuitively grasps that she can illuminate him. Henderson expects a moment of awakening" (Kim, 1994:93). His quest as well as test commences from the cursed wasteland of the irrational Arnewi with the one eyed queen Willatale. As a visitor from civilization he is preoccupied with a feeling of superiority while he met the matriarchal tribe headed by Prince Itelo. Henderson possessed this superior air as he could speak the imperial language English. But this feeling was shattered when he listened to Itelo speaking chaste English. After the ritual fight with Itelo, Henderson meets Queen Willatale and princess Mtalba. They too had shocked the questing hero with their tribal characteristics.

When the woman of Bittahness Mtalba offers herself to him, Henderson rejects it. Actually he is indulging in an act of gratification of the soul. The exotic lady's attempt to chase and seduce Henderson is another part of the ritualistic drama and the reaction of the protagonist manifests an initial victory. But this initial triumph of Henderson is just a prelude to a major disaster.

In the background of a quasi-allegorical Africa, Bellow presents the tragic plight of a cattle-loving tribe. It was a time of drought. As the water supply is polluted by the plague of frogs, cattle can't drink water and they fall dead one by one. The irrational tribals consider killing of the frogs as a taboo.

Henderson comes to their rescue and he attempts to destroy the frogs of the cistern. It is actually meant as a sign of reciprocating or compromising for the wisdom already imparted to him – "Grun-tu-molani. Man want to live" (*HRK*, 74). From there he feels that he gets love from the Angelic Arnewi people which was denied by the civilized folk. Henderson does not think about the consequences of his act when he tosses the bomb to burst away the frogs. He is overconfident of the power of the bomb and its failure indicates the limitations of civilized culture over the primitive practices. His African experience forces Henderson to assure that disharmony and disorder are present in both civilized and primitive worlds. Henderson, marching into the Wariri village discovers the presence of a civilized tribal dignity Dahfu – a philosopher king. But, later, he witnesses the henously manipulated death of Dahfu in the hopo.

Henderson's wrestling task trial in the land of the chillen darkness with the corpse is another instance for his reckless performance. These acts

of pugnacity are just to satisfy the inner spirit's demand to burst the spirit's sleep. And finally the protagonist succeeds in answering to his inner voice. In his search for finding solution to the inner problems, Henderson is lead to further troubles. Desire for order results in disorder and he continues the rituals of life and death. "I believe in Lazarus. I believe in the awakening of the dead. I am sure that for some, at least, there is a resurrection"(*HRK*, 199).

Henderson's contact with the Arnewi tribe and Willatale symbolising wisdom results in the awareness of the inherent human desire to live. Actually she succeeds in recognizing the basic impulse behind Henderson's quest. Unfortunately, he fails to free the Arnewi people from the plague. Instead he only emerges as a disgraced and humiliated adventurer. Even though, Bellow depicts a non-Jewish character, Henderson occasionally appears with the traits and peculiarities of a Jew. In this instance, it is worth to remember the stock characters like k*lotzes* and *meshuggahs* of the Yiddish folklore. The comedy of blasting the cistern converts Henderson into a crazy buffoon – a *meshuggah.*

Inspite of the parodic element, *Henderson the Rain King* is a fiction of ideas as it bristles with constant debates and justifications. Henderson's expansive inquiries ultimately confer a serious tone even though he

occasionally appears as a comic genius. It is true that with the enormity of his size and weight he is caricatured as an absurd hero playing the ridiculous role of a buffoon. Humorously enough he is a third person participant in the honeymoon trip to Africa. But he leaves Charlie Albert and his bride and avoids the proposed photographic expedition. He plays violin, feeds pigs and occasionally roars wildly enough to frighten the neighbours. These Henderson idiosyncrasies have deeper symbolic significance.

The final achievement of kingly serenity and silence, from the image of a rough pig farmer has different stages. To escape from the maddening disorders, Henderson takes his father's violin. "My main purpose was to reach my father by playing on his violin" (*HRK*, 30). He tries to communicate with the dead spirit through music for solace. It is also an attempt to discipline himself. "Down in the basement of the house, I worked very hard as I do everything. I had felt I was pursuing my father's spirit, whispering, 'Oh, Father, Pa. Do you recognize the sounds? This is me, Gene on your violin, trying to reach you' " (*HRK*, 30).

Though Henderson tries and wants to avoid death, he is automatically drawn towards witnessing deadly scenes and at last death itself. After the initial failure in the course of the safari, he travels through the desert along

with Romilayu to meet the Wariri – "a dangerous tribe dealing in death" (Clayton, 1968: 167). They are warlike, aggressive and chillen darkness symbolising devils battling for the Henderson soul. The Wariri tribe and the Arnewi represent two antithetical cultures and the former tries to make the best use of Henderson's excessive energy. They try to have a control over his exuberant psychic side. These two tribal cultures are influenced and controlled by literate and cultured nobles. Even then these primitive societies have diverse types of society.

There is an appropriate allegorical dimension to the novel as these opposing cultures represent Angels and Devils. The Arnewi tribe with angelic traits is peace living people with cattle raising tradition. "You have to understand that these people love their cattle like brothers and sister, like children, they have more than fifty terms just to describe the various shapes of the horns, and Itelo explained to me that there were hundreds of words for the facial expression of cattle..." (*HRK*, 51).

Apart from the psychological stages of the Henderson disposition, the tribes denote two facets of his adventure—chaos versus horror and death. Henderson had his earlier associations with pigs and had "made a considerable study of these clever doomed animals" (*HRK*, 22). It is strange to note his premonition regarding the association with the Wariri

beast—the lion. "Anyway, I was a pig man. And as the prophet Daniel warned King Nebuchadnezzar, 'They shall drive thee from among men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field' " (*HRK*, 22).

The Wariri situation also is full of death indictors. When Henderson reaches there, he finds himself exposed to an embassy of death images. King Dahfu was playing with skulls and if anybody drops it, that will be the death of the tribesman. The other reminders of death are shrunken head, corpse in the hut, the hanging bodies, the carved wooden statues and above all the lion in the den.

The Wariri tribe was gladdened by the triumph of Henderson, which was also a test of his excessive energy—both physical and psychic. He takes part in a highly ritualistic rain making ceremony. With the extraordinary feat of strength Henderson could easily lift up the wooden idol of goddess Mummah. He becomes the tribal rain King—the Sungo.

The fertilizing rains pour down on the barren land of the Wariri. The rain also cleanses the earlier sin of the mass destruction of the frogs. Frogs are believed to be representatives of the rain god by the primitive Africans. "Henderson symbolically destroys the rain god (frogs) with a bomb (fire) for which he must atone by becoming symbolically the rain–god himself" (Singh, 991:42). "Masquerade" as a theme is projected through images.

After the rain making ritual, Henderson acquires the new role and the 'Sungo' is Henderson masqueraded as an exalted King. This elevation cum exaltation takes place at the spiritual level also. He is lifted up, assuming the new role and is ready for a transcendence.

The notion that he inherits the place and position of others startles him. He attains the status of the Sungo, quite unexpectedly. To him he is only a displaced king and this reminds Henderson's reflections over the death of his brother which forces him to have an undeserving inheritance. He does not occupy a real and genuine station in life.

Several critics have evaluated *Henderson the Rain King* as a parody of dominant modern literary motifs. The central metaphor is that of a knight on quest. Henderson, the modern quester knight gets timely assistance from the serene princess (Queen Willatale) of the exotic land Arnewi. She imparts the secret of life "Grun–tu-molani: Man want to live" (*HRK*, 74). But strangely enough the Arnewi tribe could not get the blessings. Instead the curse is deepened and the sufferings continued. They experience a burning in water.

King Dahfu, who had exposure to William James and the psychoanalyst Wilhem Reich recognizes Henderson as an 'avoider'. The basic tenets of the Henderson psyche are fear and anxiety of death. He

confesses to King Dahfu that he is "very restless" (*HRK*, 160) and is "rushing through the world too hard" (*HRK*, 160). Dahfu prepares plans to overcome these tormenting issues. He reveals the secrets behind his phenomenal serenity and unusual spirituality. He assumes the role of a Reality instructor and Henderson finally surrenders to Dahfu's experiments. Imitating the beast is the technique used to instil lion qualities in Henderson. He convinces that Henderson can perform miracles, incredible tasks to please and delight the tribe as Henderson has absorbed lion qualities from Atti—the lioness kept in the palace.

Finally, Henderson becomes the successor to Dahfu, as he is killed in the ritual lion hunt arranged for the confirmation of the kingship. When he realises the danger and dilemma, Henderson makes a sudden dash from the Wariri world with the lion cub supposed to be Dahfu's soul. From the abyss of confusion and danger, the tired hero escapes. A chastened and transformed Henderson steps out from the plane and runs with the small orphan boy and the lion cub suggestive of the celebration of freedom. They go 'running-leaping, leaping, pounding, and tingling over the pure white lining of the gray Arctic silence" (*HRK*, 286). This final enjoyment in the uninhabited frozen ground of the Arctic region reveals his newfound energy and joy.

The concluding scene is majestic for its symbolic significance and emotive overtones. It anticipates the pastoral elegance celebrated in *Herzog* (1964). It is Newfoundland covered with pure white snow. The background is serene and immaculate with the arctic silence. Moreover it is the Sunday morning of the Thanksgiving Day.

Bellow's affirmation of human dignity and the possibility of redemption in *Henderson the Rain King* is achieved through cultural interaction of the two streams; the American experience versus the ethnic African. This enables to engender an inner transformation, which culminates in the realisation that the world is no more an oppressor. In his journey towards the process of 'becoming' Henderson's experiences force to articulate certain insights. His transformation to reality takes place very slowly. Even this gradual process of change is through plenty of resistance. Ellen Pifer draws the attention to the symbolic significance of a pith helmet, which Henderson always refuses to part with. "This helmet, which the white man wears to shield himself from the blazing African sun, becomes the focus of a recurrent motif emblemizing Henderson's militant resistance to reality" (1990:103).

The lessons learnt regarding striving, control of life and also how to lift and release from the depth of despair prepares Henderson for the final

reconciliation. He finds ways to overcome anxiety, strives and succeeds to display the noble quality of family love. "Whatever gains I ever made were always due to love and nothing else" (*HRK*, 284).

Most of the questing heroes of Bellow are observers like Sammler and Citrine. Their assessment of society does not spring from the process of active participation. But Henderson's role is participatory and the judgements are from his ability to face crucial situations. From the vast African exposure, he realises the significance of social responsibility and the uniqueness of the individual. Instead of a depressive view of mankind, he nourishes a sort of ebullient optimism, which is a tenet of Bellovian thinking.

The central concerns in *Henderson the Rain King* are how to accept reality and the enigma of death. Images of "devouring" and "killing" reinforce the theme of death. His "soul is like a pawn shop. I mean it's filled with unredeemed pleasures, old clarinets, and cameras, and moth-eaten fur" (*HRK*, 72). Death is often feared and the repulsive and frightening aspects are projected through apt symbols. "I don't often suffer from insomnia, but tonight I had a lot of things on my mind, the prophecy of Daniel, the cat, the frogs, the ancient-looking place, the weeping delegation, the wrestling match with Itelo, and the queen having

looked into my heart and telling me of the grun-tu-molani" (*HRK*, 82). Spiders, reptiles, insects, flies, octopus, lacerated dead bodies, and fierce flowers suggest the agitated mind of the protagonist. Ideas of purification and elation are expressed through the images of locusts and birds. "I guess I can find food and water on the way. I can eat locusts" (*HRK*, 97).

Animal imagery and the transcendence of Henderson are interlinked. At certain junctures he is almost transformed into animal nature. In the initial stage he was associated with pigs as a means of livelihood. Later there are other stages at which Henderson dwells with other beasts as a part of his purgation. In Dahfu's terminology, Henderson has to remove the "ego-emphasis" (*HRK*, 221) to incarnate the lioness into himself through imitating and dramatising the lion behaviour. "Oh, Henderson, watch how she is rhythmical in behavior. Did you do the cat in Anatomy One? Watch how she gives her tail a flex. I feel it as if undergoing it personally. Now let us follow her" (*HRK*, 221). This again reinforces the repeated reminder—"I was once more fatally embroiled with animals, according to the prophecy of Daniel which I had never been able to shake off – 'They shall drive you from among men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field' " (*HRK*, 78). We see how Henderson's

transcendence begins with the association of the cat and proceeds towards frogs to end up in the lion therapy.

Henderson and the Arnewi suffer from the same ailment—death of the self and death of the cattle. They try to overcome this by running away from death. But death claims victory over the Arnewi, and Henderson out of guilt and disappointment disappears from the scene. "My heart was already fattening in anticipation of their death. We hate death, we fear death, but when you get right down to cases, there's nothing like it. I was sorry for the cows." (*HRK*, 77).

In the next confrontation with the Wariri tribe, Henderson was forced to shatter the illusion of his ego. He learnt the wisdom of life from them. It is this new awareness which prepares Henderson for an accommodation to society. He is eventually redeemed and released from the metaphoric internal burden. At last, Henderson decides to pursue the abandoned medical course and returns to Lily as a devoted husband. He writes:

> I want you to enroll me at Medical Center and give my name as Leo E. Henderson. The reason for that I will tell you when I get home. Aren't you excited? Dearest girl, as a doctor's wife you will have to be more clean... I haven't decided yet where to practice. I guess if I tried it at home I'd scare the

> neighbors to pieces. If I put my ear against their chests as an M.D., they'd jump out of their skins.
>
> Therefore, I may apply for missionary work, like Dr. Wilfred Grenfell or Albert Schweitzer.(*HRK*, 240)

From mobility he traverses towards stillness. After the psycho–physical excursions, Henderson, as a typical Bellow hero voyages back to society in a jubilant mood. "There is some kind of service motivation which keeps on after me"(*HRK*, 160). It is this affirmative transformation which renders a serious tone to the Henderson story. This transcendence and final resolution is an aspect of the Yiddish concept of *bitochon* (faith in life). Instead of living in isolation, human life must take care of community. This community-oriented life is an ethical obligation of every individual and is the core of the humanistic outlook in Bellow's fictional landscape. After Henderson's escape from death, the progression towards inner peace is completed when he decides to be a part of society. M.A. Quayum points out how in the end Henderson is free to live a whole life characterized by "equipoise" (1995: 74).

The narrative voice of the protagonist is not disrupted by any alternate views. Though in the form of a monologue, the double voice of Henderson suits to the formal and the colloquial. Through this dialogic

voicing the Henderson discourse with "underlying epic formality" (Pearce, 1975:75) sufficiently provides ample scope of parodic elements.

> Literary antecedents of the novel also include such works of cultural anthropology as Freud's *Totem and Taboo,* Jung's *Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious,* and Frazers *The Golden Bough,* all of which have a discernible influence. The vast body of quest literature provides Bellow with his paraphernalia of mountains, jungles, deserts, plagues, droughts and deluge under the rubrics of quest, ordeal, and reconciliation. *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court, Moby Dick*— the list of quest novels with which Henderson has illuminingly been compared is long. (Kiernan, 1989:79)

Commenting on the archetypal pattern of Henderson's quest, Richard Pearce observes "the incongruous colloquialism and the mocking parody" (1975:73). Though the inconclusiveness of the novel is considered as "a failing of *Henderson the Rain King"* (Kiernan, 1989:93) Bellow establishers the unlimited nature of personal freedom and Henderson's eagerness to have further surprising experiences. Through the picaresque adventure, Bellow ridicules the childish desires and interests of the

"all-American Henderson in the centre of cliff-hanging Saturday afternoon movie series of the 1930's and 1940's". (Goldman, 1983:110). Observing the "careful artistry" (Fuchs, 1992:104) of the "narrative sequence" (Fuchs, 1992:104) Daniel Fuchs points out that the early versions of the novel are "much condensed" (1983:104). The technique of introducing a narrative "I" results in the formation of a confessional novel.

"The triumph of *Henderson the Rain King* is the creation of a voice, and, as we can see, it did indeed have to be created. Compulsive, self ironic, beseeching, loud is this voice" (Fuchs, 1992:103). The narrator in the initial stage is found unable to arrange the disorderly rush of things. He is uncertain regarding the sequencing of events as he lives in an "eternal present in which the past does not exist and everyone is always a stranger" (Newman, 1982:43).

The psychological disturbance enforces a sort of alienation and as pointed out by Judie Newman, this is also due to "that of a culture alienated from its origins, living in the expectation of immediate salvation in a new world" (1982:43). Regarding the past, Henderson endorses the American faith in living in the present totally rejecting and wiping out the past history and previous experiences. And in the present Henderson is worried about mortality and death. The theme of mortality and death are

interlinked in the Arnewi and Wariri episodes. Regeneration and the aesthetics of culture and custom are placed against the possibility of salvation.

Henderson's movements are for order and they are directed as a part of search for reality. The hunt for reality, as observed by Irving Malin "suggests that reality is erratic and orderly, wild and peaceful, high and low. It is mixed movement" (1969:115). This mixed movements and unearthly scenes in the narration contribute to create an unreal situation even though the narration implicates search for reality, as the central concern. Even with fanciful farcical elements and fantasy, under the comic vein, Bellow's exaggerated fooling is a serious one. Henderson, on his way of 'becoming' was inventing experiences. As an American picaro, he cherishes an emotionally stable inner spaciousness. This alone can liberate the soul from the process of constant freezing. Along with this, Henderson is trying to seek salvation through reconciling with the reality.

A serious vision is embedded in the many comic interludes and humorous episodes. Behind the seemingly comic quest of Henderson, there is the implicit focussing on issues related to salvation, search for truth and wisdom of life. In Henderson, there is the synthesis of serio comic elements. His suffering may appear serio-comic, but the different

motifs and aspects like quest, revolt, anxiety, comic disposition, riotous nature and logical ability are dramatically blended together. All the so-called comic actions performed, aim at achieving his inner desire. "Eugene Henderson goes a long way toward chipping out the significant moral outlines of his existence" (Braham, 1984:26).

Analysing the underlying allegorical structure and the animal imagery in *Henderson the Rain King*, Kathleen King traces how the protagonist's neurosis leads to exploits of mythic dimensions.

> French psychoanalyst Lacan postulates that neurosis is not knowing one's desire. Henderson's neurosis takes the form of restlessness, suffering, and the inner voice which cries 'I want' when Henderson travels to Africa, faces the prophecy of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, and discovers his animal nature, he stops *becoming,* starts *being* and finally learns what he wants. (King, 1988:44)

Judith Moss in an article "The Body as Symbol in Saul Bellow's *Henderson the Rain King*" identifies the body of Henderson as "the central dramatic symbol" (1970:51). It shapes the narrative and "metaphorically generates the themes of regeneration and recovery" (Moss, 1970:51). Further, the essay traces the "archetypal return motif" (Moss, 1970:55)

through the pattern of birth imagery. Though Henderson fails in the initial stages of life both in America and in the African wilderness, the final image is that of a powerful spirit with an "earnest desire to live meaningfully and to do what is right" (Porter, 1974:185). He triumphantly smashes the metaphorical walls with a "riotous comic spirit or powerful drive" (Porter, 1974:185).

After experiencing a death-in-life existence a spiritually enlightened Henderson marches towards the glorious path of salvation as a reborn hero. This gradual transcendence from alienation to accommodation and from acute suffering to salvation is a feature of the Bellow pattern. Through this idea of salvation through suffering, the moral imaginary—a spiritual vision of life is endorsed.

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# Chapter III

## The Psychic Odyssey of the Estranged Protagonist

Protagonist as a displaced and disoriented individual on a quest for identity is a recurrent thematic concern in modern fiction. Modern man's chaotic and fragmentary existence overburdened with humiliations is commented on by Bellow in his Nobel Lecture. "We stand open to all anxieties. The decline and fall of everything is our daily dread; we are agitated in private life and tormented by public questions" (Bellow, 1977: 64).

The Bellow hero accepts alienation as part of life but he does not subscribe to it and the disturbing tone of nihilistic despair is conspicuously absent in his fictional oeuvre. The strong desire for a cleansing apocalypse is an important aspect of the psychological feeling that civilization has reached its terminal point and could be saved only through destruction. Anyhow Bellow does not endorse such a notion of social revolution. In an interview with Nina Steers, Bellow points out:

> Romantic thought in the 20th century has been apocalyptic nihilism—a conviction that the world is evil, that it must be destroyed and rise again... This one finds in D. H. Lawrence and one sees it also in writers like Ezra Pound and the

> German, Ludwig Benn. This apocalyptic romanticism is also a political fact but, without being in the least conservative, I deny this. I don't see that we need to call for the destruction of the world in hope of a phoenix.(Steers, 1964: 7)

Saul Bellow's challenging and complex novel *Herzog* (1964) is a psychological scrutiny of a man in conflict. The incoherent and chaotic experiences of a modern intellect engaged in an unending quest for a viable way of life and tenable philosophy is presented in a discursive style. In this unusually hero – centered fiction, which is a general feature of Bellow, the intellectual hero is anxious about the 'self'. He is concerned with the exploration of the true self and 'mind', which may be the real source of our suffering or salvation. The strong intellectual repertoire is evident in the brooding, meditative and questioning Herzog endowed with an imaginatively volatile mind. His adventures are essentially psychic and often he comes out with intricating thoughts. Keith Opdahl points out, "The major drama of the Bellow novel is psychological" (1970:10).

Herzog is really suffering from a disquieting sense of alienation. His suffering becomes more poignant and intense as there is no one to share the burnt out inside of this scholar who goes almost mad with confounding intellectual propositions. He is haunted by various ideas and

philosophies like Calvinism advocated by Dr Edvig, the Modernist crisis ethics of Sander Himmelstein, the extreme romanticism of Nachman, the emotional altruism of the Japanese Mistress Sono and Ramona's claims of desire and pleasure.

Twice married and multimistressed Moses Elkanah Herzog undergoes an emotional crisis after the breakdown of his second marriage. He is depicted as a forty-seven year old Jewish American professor born of immigrant parents. As the novel opens, he is tucked away in a house in the Berkshire Mountains. It is summer and since spring, he has been composing fantastic and endless letters "to the news papers, to people in public life, to friends and relatives and at last to the dead, his own obscure dead, and finally the famous dead" *(H,* 7).

Through these epistolary complaints in the form of "idea-letters" (Fuchs, 1992:123) he is trying to explain and justify his isolated and distracted fragmentary acts. Flashback scenes provide the readers with information about Herzog's relation with his family, his ex-wives Daisy and Madeleine, his Japanese mistress Sono and the present love Ramona. The "paraphrased epigrams" (Fuchs, 1992:127) from psychologists and philosophers with lisping ideological comments, and the ambling letters in discursive style suggest both the physical and psychological movements of

Herzog. The mental versus the spatial shifting is depicted in a highly dramatic way.

Absorbing subjectivity and the peculiar interior argument make *Herzog* (1964) a complex work and the actions take place largely in the mind of the eponymous hero. His haunted self is projected through the fragmented mental correspondence. This fragmentary vision of Herzog directly points to the nature of modern existence. Herzog is a replica of the modern man and the novel is evidently a case study of a modern man caught up in the confusion of an urban society and an alien environment. His struggle is largely in the chaotic privacy of his own mind. Most of the fundamental questions pertaining to the modern American context have spiritual and religious connotations in the conflict raging in him. In an interview with Sanford Pinsker, Bellow observes, "We are engaged in a historical analysis, trying to guess what is going to endure and what is going to fall to the ground" (1985:21).

In his desperate attempt to create some order out of personal chaos, Herzog acquires the image of a mental patient trying to communicate with the outside world through a process of self-examination. He takes refuge in the half finished unmailed letters fabricated by a highly volatile and imaginatively fertile mind. Though he is trying to pose answers to the self

imposed questions, the replies are ironic and through the process of stock taking, the dual self of the protagonist is projected. "The extraordinary action of Herzog's well-funded but disordered mind is laid anti-chronologically over a plot that explores the outward world of reality" (Bradbury, 1978:21).

For Herzog, it is extremely strenuous and impossible to get severed from the various societal connections and duties. In the attempt to escape from these organized pressures of society he runs into a cobweb of complicated relations. This intensifies the tension and agony, which acquire symbolic qualities.

Bellow's inducing of the character to indulge in a process of self-examination is part of his narrative strategy.

> Resuming his self-examination, he admitted that he had been a bad husband—twice. Daisy his first wife he had treated miserably. Madeleine, his second, had tried to do him in. To his son and daughter he was a loving but bad father. To his own parents he had been an ungrateful child. To his country, an indifferent citizen. To his brothers and his sister, affectionate but remote. With his friends, an egoist. With

> love, lazy. With brightness, dull. With power, passive. With his own soul, evasive.*(H*, 10 – 11)

Herzog was closely following the psychiatrist's corner in the journals and in the final unusually free condition of mind, comments on the recent article "Existential Unrest in the Unconscious" *(H,* 331) by Dr. Waldemar Zozo, the navy psychiatrist. It was this Norfolk doctor who observed the "unusually immature" *(H,* 330) nature of Herzog. In the letter to him, Herzog comments on the beguiling nature of the article to repudiate the doctor's points and informs: "I am really in an unusually free condition of mind" *(H*, 331). In his kaleidoscopic mind, memories and characters were running at terrible speed. His mind persecuted everyone and the unique memory "was like a terrible engine" *(H*, 138).

Herzog who appears as a solitary mourner manufacturing personal history has the symbolic quality of a protagonist going through the intricate process of psychoanalysis, with all the paraphernalia of a psychological journey. Deep personal crisis forms the emotional landscape. By the exploration of the inner self, a mythification of the self is achieved in a confessional mode.

Throughout the novel Bellow presents Herzog in several roles—roles acquiring the dimension and status of images. Some of the roles are

self imposed and self-styled. Although Bellow assigns the image of a lone sufferer, Herzog is the chronicler of a particular phase in history who documents a vision of life based on his psychic experience.

Self styled as a "suffering joker" *(H*, 17) and "a learned specialist in intellectual history, handicapped by emotional confusion" *(H*, 112) Herzog plays different roles including those of a narcissist, masochist and anachronist. "At times he was cruelly absent minded" *(H*, 159) and being "a high minded intellectual" *(H*, 159) he appears "a learned specialist in intellectual history" *(H*, 112). On one occasion he confides to Ramona that he was "developing the psychology of a runaway slave" *(H*, 196). This "man of many blessings" *(H*, 192) and "a prince of the erotic Renaissance" *(H*, 193) was "a quacker in love-making" *(H*, 209).

"The look of conceit or proud troubles" *(H*, 255) in Herzog infuriated Father Herzog to the point of shooting. Father J. Herzog did everything quickly and neatly but failed in all; and has emerged as a *luftmenshen* – a miserably defeated speculator. Herzog inherited the quickness of remembering from his father. "He could calculate percentages mentally at high speed" *(H*, 144). Strangely enough Herzog too emerges as a *luftmenshen* by investing his fortune to modify Berkshire just to please Madeleine. Though reconciled later, to his father Herzog

appeared as a "Croak in a flophouse" *(H*, 256) and this "Idiot" *(H*, 269) and "Calf" *(H*, 257) was ordered not to attend his funeral.

But his Japanese friend Sono "rated him higher than kings and presidents" *(H*, 179). Herzog recalls how she kept him clean "with amusements and with sorrow" *(H*, 181) though others "treated like dirt" *(H*, 272). He appreciates the philosophical bent of her temperament apart from sensualities. "She tried to explain to me once that earth and the planets were sucked from the sun by a passing star. As if a dog should trot by a bush and set free worlds. And in those worlds life appeared and within that life such as we – souls" *(H*, 181). In his self-appraisal, Herzog confides "I wasted myself in stupid schemes liberating my spirit" *(H*, 255).

With the acrobatics of argument in polemical discourse, Herzog assumes the posture of an intellectual hero, but escapes from total mental break up with an intuitive comic genius, which is an inevitable quality of the Jewish racial consciousness. Human life is not presented as a pursuit of serious aims and issues only. In the face of sufferings and pressures, Herzog sustains the equilibrium of sanity with a sense of humour. In his attempt to debunk the " philosophical gratuitous" *(H*, 171) Herzog assumes the serio-comic role of a philosopher glorious.

The ludicrous effort of Lucas Asphalter, the zoologist trying to humanize the macaque monkey provides another instance of comedy. But through this comic scene, the humane nature of Asphalter is contrasted with the futile attempt of Herzog to instill human qualities in Madeleine. Both the incidents have theatricality with elements of comedy. The sense of humour becomes highly comical in certain instances. Herzog remembers how " he tried to make his lust comical, to show how absurd it all was, easily the most wretched form of human struggle, the very essence of slavery" *(H*, 226).

In his "pursuit of a grand synthesis" *(H*, 215) Herzog feels that he had "committed a sin of some kind against his own heart" *(H*, 215). And with great sense of humour he observes: "What this country needs is a good five- cent Synthesis" (*H*, 215). Comic arguments with Nietzsche and Heideggar illustrate his genius in contradicting ideas. "Dear Doktor Professor Heideggar, I should like to know what you mean by the expression 'the fall into the quotidian? When did this fall occur? Where were we standing when it happened?" *(H*, 55).

Herzog's ambiguous and often-twisted statements throw doubt on his sanity. But the assertions to Asphalter regarding brotherhood and human nature reveal the sanity of a noble mind. "I really believe that

brotherhood is what makes a man human. If I owe God a human life, this is where I fall down" *(H*, 280).

Memory, victimization and disintegration are some of the subordinate themes, invariably linked with the self. The novel is a journey into memories and the process of victimization that disintegrates the self is emphasized through a set of disoriented acts. Apart from the contemporary thought currents, Herzog's mind is often distracted by many acts recalled from the past. From the Napolean Street Memories, with the romantic description of the Montreal slum and the Canadian childhood, memory slides along reveries and recollections, which conjure up a world of magic, beauty and wonder.

Delighted with the brilliancy and ecstasy of thought, Herzog's memory also traverses the edge of sufferings and mournings of his family. Mind often takes odd jumps with the speed of an avalanche. Nostalgic recollections of the past life experience are placed against the present surroundings and the past is proved to be very essential for an understanding and evaluation of Herzog's present psychic frame. Veneration for the past is an aspect of a peculiar romantic sensibility and even amidst the chaotic memories; Herzog tries to capture moments from very ancient times. The major chunk of the nostalgic ruminations are

revitalizations of the past life experiences— childhood days, culture, race, childhood friends and academic fellows.

Memory functions as an objective correlative to connect these experiences— memory both in the form of recollected sequences of events and historical events outside the personal life circle of Herzog. " Herzog sometimes thinks of himself as a kind of walking memory bank, and he takes pleasure in reminding his brothers and former childhood friends of tender, humorous or dramatic moments from the past they have forgotten" (Wilson 1990:61).

Memory serves as both theme and technique in *Herzog.* With his memory, all the mad and dead are in his custody. Intensity of these memories and the nostalgic longing help to diminish the quantum of Herzog's confusion and burden. It is memory, which serves as an agent to counterbalance and judge the ultimate personal crisis. These fragmented recollections of the past can be viewed as a deliberately manipulated escapist tendency. Tony Tanner treats Herzog as a "prisoner of perceptions" (1988:9) and comments on the content and psychological aspects of the letters. "Some of these letters are comic, some angry, some desperate, some urgent, many of them theoretical and pedagogic. They are a way of relieving the accumulating pressures on his mind; also they are

part of his vast attempt to take stock, understand and clarify" (Tanner, 1988:15). His behaviour and thoughts have a dialectical pattern and the novel appears to be patternless because of the complex structure.

Herzog's mental journey into the past quite often results in a sort of spiritual illumination and a fresh awareness of humanity. This directly accelerates the process of synthesis and resolution of the major personal problems. His letters reflect deep concerns regarding brutality, injustice, societal issues and morality. Drawing inferences from history, Moses establishes the metaphoric suggestiveness of the Nazi Holocaust and the Hiroshima tragedy as cruelties perpetrated by man himself.

A morally atavistic modern society with flamboyant theatricality is shown through retrospective thinking. The reminiscent mode of narration and the technique of telling as showing are the strategies employed. It is to be noted that Herzog attains inner peace through the process of incessant letter writing, which directly enables him to reminisce the ethnic childhood days resplendent with filial memories. As noted by Daniel Fuchs, the Napolean Street section, which originally formed a separate piece, called "Memories of a Bootlegger's Son" (1992:135) has nostalgic and elegiac tone.

A fascinating aspect of the Bellow fiction is the blending of memory and themes. Introspective mode and the monologic narration devoid of conversation lead us into an intricate Herzogian psychic world. Illuminating references to the past philosophers and thought currents enable one to have a critique of past culture filtered through history and memory. Herzog in a letter to Nietzsche suggests. "A lack of historical sense is the congenital defect of all philosophers" *(H*, 14). He shares the Hegalian view of history, which makes us human, and the pragmatic view of history that memory can humanize.

Time plays a significant role as the narration shifts from present to past—a sort of psychological leap and quick transition form the present experience to remembered or extended memories. Mind shuttles from one idea to another perception, which triggers other ideas and formulations. Another technical device dexterously employed is the blending of memory, action and themes. Apart from the concept of 'time referent', 'past' has the connotation of 'tradition'. Traditional customs and rituals are to be respected and inner peace can be achieved only through a total involvement cum veneration of the past. Along with the historical survey of different philosophies, Bellow introduces the theme of contrasting value systems of two religions. Christianity is viewed by Herzog as valorization

of suffering; Judaism in his perception celebrates optimism and affirmation of life. This life-affirming note is the Life Force of Bellow's vision of life. "*Herzog* critiques Christianity's emphasis on fate and original sin while celebrating Judaism's emphasis on optimism and individual choice. Herzog sees Christianity as death-worshipping and Judaism as life-affirming"(Mannis, 1997:26).

Phases in history are treated as contexts and significant moments are commented in the letters to Harris Pulver and Monsignor Hilton. Contextualisation of history is the crux of *Mr. Sammler's Planet* (1970) also, and the city metaphor symbolises the spiritual condition witnessed by a holocaust victim living in a period of moon voyages.

While Elya Gruner, clinging to his European past, tries to derive moral strength from his intense family feeling of the old system, Herzog is seen absorbed in genealogies. This symbolic allegiance to the past is a part of the moral values. Herzog often went to Israel to visit the old relatives to help himself to be linked to a personal past.

Bellow's writings register an acute awareness of the significance of tradition, accepted customs and respected value systems of society. The emotive overtones and the images of morality establish the importance of a world and society beautified and morally strengthened by humanistic

virtues. Degenerative forces of a disintegrating technological society are projected against a visualised world of humanistic ideals. And this concept of 'humanistic virtues' is the basic tenet in the moral imaginary – the vision of life in Bellow's fictional landscape.

Living in memories and struggling desperately, Herzog's acute mental pain is akin to the Romantic agony. It is a basic trait perceivable in him. To unburden and free himself from the entanglements, he wrestles with ideas and concepts. Composing endless mental letters is an adjustment mechanism adapted by Herzog to compensate for other inherent weaknesses—inner rage and loss of sexual powers. Commenting on Herzog's lengthy mental correspondence, Jonathan Wilson points out that they represent the "expressions of his deepest frustrations and an antidote to his suffering" (1985: 141).

Though the process of letter writing is a cathartic one, it also establishes the cult of the individual ego. In this disruptive narrative, the narrator withdraws himself into the chaotic incidents of a personal past and speaks about Moses Herzog from Herzog's point of view. Thus, the voice of the narrator establishes the cult of the individual ego. Romantic revolt, defeatist self pity and fatal woman concept are the other facets traceable in

the autodiegetic narration. Occasionally, Herzog fails to articulate coherently and this suffering from death of words due to emotional crisis is yet another aspect of the Romantic sensibility. "And towards the end of the term, there were long pauses in his lectures. He would stop, muttering 'Excuse me,' reaching inside his coat for his pen" *(H,* 8). The mental letters are also necessitated as he failed miserably on oral articulation. "But at the silent moment at which he faced Ramona he wrote, incapable of replying except by mental letters" *(H,* 23). Sammler too experiences this problem of suffering from death of words which makes him to feel "uncommunicative" (*MSP*, 237) to all except Elya Gruner.

"Throughout the work, Romanticism and Christianity come under attack, both their philosophies and their major exponents" (Goldman, 1983: 135). But Bellow confers certain explicit romantic traits and sensibilities on Herzog. There are also references to practitioners of Romantic philosophy. Paradoxically enough, the repeated excursions into the Blakean principle runs counter to Bellow's attack on Romanticism. Herzog has basically a romantic disposition and apart from the trace of romantic agony, which was initiated in Romantic poetry by Blake, he also alludes to the defeatist self pity expressed by Shelley. All alone in the

rattling cab, Herzog mutters, "I fall upon the thorns of life, I bleed" *(H,* 214).

But it is the same romantic nature, which helps Herzog to turn towards objects of nature during hours of dejection. "In the mild end of the afternoon, later, at the waterside in Woods Hole, waiting for the ferry, he looked through the green darkness at the net of bright reflections on the bottom. He loved to think about the power of the sun, about light, about the ocean. The purity of the air moved him"*(H,* 97–98). Nature comes to his rescue to overcome the distractions and pressures put on him by the hostile forces of society. It also alleviates the tension and dejection of an urban existence. He undertakes an air trip to Chicago "in the clearer atmosphere" *(H,* 248) to see his daughter Junie. "Beneath, the white clouds were foaming. And the sun, like the spot that inoculated us against the whole of disintegrating space. He looked into the blue vacancy and at the sharp glitter of wingborne engines"*(H,* 248).

Content with nature and all alone in the old Berkshire mansion, he was sleeping on a mattress or in the hammock. The self pitying Herzog was finally able to perceive beauty in ordinary things of life and his vision itself becomes transcendental. The enigmatic ending is suggestive of the

Bellow hero's preparation for a higher level of existence and a fresh awareness. This new knowledge is attained through trivial experiences and suffering. The attainment of blissful happiness after suffering indicates an eastern strain of philosophic thinking. The reborn hero's sins and sufferings are going to be compensated. From the Jewish perspective the final salvaging through suffering suggests the concept of *canosis*—which opens up new areas of knowledge. Herzog is confident and cheerful after the transition from the position of non-awareness to awareness. "I am pretty well satisfied to be, to be just as it is willed and for as long as I may remain in occupancy"*(H*, 347).

Urban landscape in Bellow fiction consistently symbolises the moral condition of humanity and it serves as a map to measure and evaluate the decayed ethical system. Bellow asserts: "the urban crisis and the condition of our culture are one and the same thing" (1972:20).

In the text Bellow dwells on the problematics of urban scenario. The psychological burden weighs Herzog down, and the physical world also suffocates and torments him. In his desperate struggle with the burdening forces, he often gets relief in the pastoral elegance of Nature. This retreat "from the middle height of New York, looking down, seeing

lunchtime crowds like ants upon smoked glass" *(H,* 135) into the comfortable idyllic landscape prepares him to escape from a dungeon existence.

In Bellow's fiction, a city like Chicago or New York serves as a central metaphor more than a naturalistic landscape. In an interview with Rockwell Gray and Harry White of the *Tri Quarterly*, Bellow points out that "Chicago's wealth is not in culture" (1984: 13). He considers the city surroundings as familiar and capable of sending messages to him. "Chicago is one of the larger provinces of my psychic life"(Gray, 1984:18). Herzog's city is not really different from the one inhabited and observed by other Bellow heroes.

The gloomy and despairing cityscape is part of the modern metropolis milieu and the city metaphors also announce the emotional and psychological environment of the protagonists. Moses takes keen interest in watching the theatricalities performed along the broad sidewalk.

> Above him the flowering glass, wired and grey, and Broadway heavy and blue in the dusk, almost tropical; at the foot of the downhill eighties lay the Hudson, as dense as mercury. On the points of radio towers in New Jersey red

> lights like small hearts beat or tingled. In mid-street, on the benches, old people: on faces, on heads, the strong marks of decay: the big legs of women and blotted eyes of men, sunken mouths and inky nostrils.(*H*, 186)

Ramona is entirely different from the other characters involved in Herzog's adventure drama of romance. She had his complete sympathy, but was in the habit of following urban ways of life. Frequently she entertained gentlemen friends with supper—another trend of the urban life. "In emancipated New York, man and woman, gaudily disguised, like two savages belonging to hostile tribes, confront each other. The man wants to deceive, and then to disengage himself; the woman's strategy is to disarm and detain him" (*H*, 195).

The novel moves from the urban milieu and the cityscape towards a healthy and brilliantly green pastoral environment, symbolically signalling Herzog's relief, hope, renewal, internal peace, optimism and reconciliation. After the fret and fever, he arrives in Ludeyville retreat, a place of "country solitude and privacy" *(H*, 329). Herzog was greeted by: "Beautiful, sparkling summer weather in the Berkshires, the air light, the streams quick, the woods dense, the green new. As for birds, Herzog's

acres seemed to have become a sanctuary" *(H*, 316). Prior to this final retreat, he expresses his strong likeage towards "agricultural or pastoral stages" *(H*, 272). Now he is free from disillusions and distractions and this retreat transports him to an idyllic setting opposed to the urban clutter and violence. Perhaps a powerful symbolic depiction of the psychological odyssey of the estranged protagonist is effected quite artistically by the juxtaposition of the urban and the rural. 'Juxtaposition' is used as theme and technique to establish the moral imaginary— the vision of life in Bellow's fictional landscape.s

The novel is an amplification of themes, images and observations already stated in the beginning. "If I am out of mind, it's all right with me, thought Moses Herzog" *(H,* 7). This arresting beginning of the novel with the shade of the soliloquy of a tired protagonist in a Greek tragedy accounts for the theatrical elements in *Herzog*. Even in his willingness to surrender and to face reality, a sort of reconciliatory tone is anticipated.

*Herzog* abounds in theatre metaphors and it is obvious that Madeleine had some theatrical genius inherited from her father— "a famous impresario— sometimes called the American Stanislavsky" *(H,* 14). With an element of theatre in her, Madeleine declares— "We can't

live together anymore"*(H,* 15). Her sentences were well formed and "this speech had been rehearsed and it seemed also that he had been waiting for the performance to begin" *(H,* 15). Symbolically enough this dramatic declaration happened "On a bright, keen fall day" *(H,* 14). Like an actress on a well-lighted stage Herzog saw her against the background of "spectral intersecting bars and especially a great blot of flaming white on the centre of the wall" *(H,* 15).

Her desertion of Herzog is symbolically alluded in the earlier part of the narration. "A gust from the lake made the framed glass tremble in Herzog's arms" *(H,* 14). He vaguely thinks, "I don't know whether I'm still a scholar. When I left Daisy, apparently I quit that, too. And Madeleine snatched it right up. Yes. They divided me up. Valentine took my elegant ways and Mady's going to be the professor" *(H,* 275). 'Madeleine' as the very word echoes the idea of 'madness', taunts Herzog to insanity with her theatricalities and unfaithfulness. The conflict is further deepened as she converts herself to Christianity and this results in a religious contest. It further accelerates the emotional conflict in him. He is soon transformed into a survivor figure. The universally accepted

paradigm of the Jew as the survivor generation makes this image of the lonely sufferer an archetypal figure.

Instead of the bi-polarity of mind, the dual aspect of the self is projected in the novel—one projected by Herzog's immediate family circle and society, and the other through his own act of stock taking through a mental chart. The trope of a mental patient trying to create order out of personal chaos is created through a series of self-imposed questions and the ironic twisted replies.

Bellow's attempt to realise the idea of the self and also to depict his pursuit of the self is a part of an epistemological design in which the supremacy of the self is established. Just as humanism and compassion are viewed as sacred virtues to be defended, the idea of the self is perceived and established as a significant concept. In his pursuit of the self, the Bellow hero has to confront agonizing moments and traumatic experiences. But even under the strain and burden, he strives hard to maintain his distinctive individuality.

Imprisonment of the self and the protagonist's relentless fight against a baffling society are the major concerns in the novel. A thematic inventory will further include themes like nostalgia, uniqueness of the

individual, dignity and divinity of man, freedom of choice, existential problems, and choosing between good and bad. Ideas and issues like affirmation, brotherly love, individual as responsible force for social set up, life style of a good man, optimism, amelioration, resurgence, reconciliation and urban versus pastoral are expressed through suggestive tones, symbols and real versus imaginary situations.

Bellow uses Nietzsche as an intellectual prop. Herzog's generalised statement regarding female situation reminds one of Nietzsche's metaphor for woman as a serpent. The notion of deep pain as an ennobling rather than debilitating factor in the shaping of an individual also owes its genesis to Nietzsche.

Bellovian fiction abounds with moral supermen endowed with affirmation and brotherly love as cardinal virtues. Herzog along with Elya Gruner are profound advocates of moral universe free from suffering, chaos, despair and pessimism. Herzog has diagnosed "a poor sort of moral exercise" *(H*, 324) declaring the doom of time. In his characteristic sensitive vein he observes, "More commonly suffering breaks people, crushes them, and it is simply unilluminating" *(H*, 324).

Along with Sammler, Herzog also is elevated to the stature of a prophet figure in view of his acute suffering. But his psychic strain is not indicated by externalised gestures of tempestuous violence or revolutionary zeal, usually associated with the unique prophets of history engaged in relentless onslaught against injustices, evils and tyrannies. Instead of a prophetic protest, a sort of masochistic and defeatist self-pity convert Herzog into a veritable sufferer. As a result he undergoes an acute metaphysical pain 'annui' and apart from the romantic agony, in the Herzogian dilemma the existential angst is also traceable.

In the struggle to accommodate himself, he was constrained to surrender to reality. His struggle in the uncongenial society yields a purgatory effect in the end. The plot of the novel is developed through discursive mental notes and the unmailed letters to the imaginary and the real. Through the chaotic arguments, Herzog "went on taking stock" *(H,* 9) of his life experience. "There was no pattern to the notes he made. They were fragments" *(H*, 9). As the novel is addressed to a modern society with fragmentary experiences, incoherent and chaotic existence lacking meaningful continuity, Bellow deliberately employs a discursive style. There is the synchronization of the confused style and the confused

protagonist. In the unmailed letters Herzog's emotional confusion is explicitly established and they represent the conflict raging within the self. Bellow establishes the disequilibrium and unsystematic thought process of the hero through letters like the one cited below:

> Dear Mama, As to why I haven't visited your grave in so long... Dear Wanda, Dear Zinka, Dear Libbie, Dear Ramona, Dear Sono, I need help in the worst way. I am afraid of falling apart. Dear Edvig, the fact is that madness also has been denied me. I don't know why I should write to you at all. Dear Mr. President, Internal Revenue regulations will turn us into a nation of book keepers. *(H*, 17)

And out of this confusion a patterned cosmos is born signalling the apparent possibility of evolving some order out of chaos. This shift from chaos to order and harmony is an aspect of the moral imaginary – the vision of life in Bellow's fictional landscape.

Bellow employs images of shutting, weight, pressure and burden to express the desperate struggle of Herzog in a deceptive, dreary and uncomfortable world. The already troubled mind with problems of alimony, divorce and infidelity is further overloaded with ideas relating to

Russian mysticism, German existentialism, Calvinism and viewpoints of Montaigne, Pascal, Kant, Fitchte, Nietzche, Spengler, Heideggar, General Eisenhover, Adlai Stevenson, Martin Luther King Junior and the "moral, useful and active" *(H*, 54) Philosophy of Dr. Bhave, the saintly social reformer. In a "whirling ecstasy" *(H*, 74) he writes letters to all those legendary heroes of history commenting on their ideas and principles. During crisis hours, he "fitted together Bacon and Locke from one side and Methodism and William Blake from the other" *(H*, 133).

In the attempt to release his heart from frustration and heaviness, Herzog undergoes an intellectual quest for order. This quest becomes the psychic odyssey of the estranged protagonist. During the course of this search for sublimation which results in a romantic retreat, he assumes various other images: "A Vulgar bastard" *(H*, 96), "a prisoner of perceptions" *(H*, 78), "a reactive depressive" *(H*, 59), "a sentimental s.o.b." *(H*, 301), "a man who shops from woman to woman" *(H*, 196), an "eager, grieving, fantastic, dangerous, crazed and, to the point of death, 'comical'" *(H*, 99).

Bellow has striven to display his refusal to accept the dominant literary taste of the era –a tendency to devalue the self. The necessity to

have an optimistic and community centered moralistic existence is suggested through different signs, situations and ideational patterning. To him a writer is a moralist and points out the necessity for an individual "to be optimistic to the point of imbecility to raise the standards of pure affirmation and cry 'yea, yea' shrilly against the deep background of 'nays'" (Bellow, 1963: 62).

Apart from the quest for the lost self, Herzog's dilemma has other metaphoric dimensions. He has to deal with personal problems and the imaginative self with intellectual alertness. He is also concerned with the philosophical inquiries of the day. In the search for the self, Herzog tries to answer the pertinent question regarding what it is to be humane. And his struggle acquires the gravity of a descent into the self.

The professor of political philosophy placed in an academic ambience imparts an intellectual flair to the novel. Chirantan Kulshrestha traces elements of Menippean satire in *Herzog* as the novel is "concerned more with intellectual themes and attitudes than with dramatic action" (1978: 14).

This intellectual exuberance and debunking of the established ideas, consistently maintained in the whole narrative frame is an adjustment

mechanism manipulated by the protagonist to guard against the darker and hostile invaders of his self. It is a survival strategy, which frees him from the eccentricities and odditties. As already stated, the cathartic effect of the letter writing process has a ritualistic significance. Just as the rain making ritual in *Henderson the Rain King* (1959) drives off the distractions, the process of letter writing helps Herzog to minimize the heaviness of his frustrations. Released from the entanglements, relaxing in his recamier couch and enjoying the pastoral elegance of the Ludeyville countryside, he is no more "an industry that manufactures personal history" *(H*, 9). A clear positive leap in Herzog's psychological odyssey and consequent maturation.

Analysing the dynamic vision of Bellow, Eusebio L. Rodrigues obseves:

> Herzog realises that all his life he has been avoiding the stern reality of death. He gradually rejects the rational philosophers (Hobbes, Locke and Bacon), throws off the prescriptions of Heideggar and the German existentialists, sweeps aside the wasteland outlook, and, taught by William Blake, accepts the need for love and brotherhood. (1984:98)

In the so called idea letters to the distinguished professors, eminent scientists and philosophers he was able to communicate effectively with his "flying spirit streaming out, speaking, piercing, making clear judgments" *(H,* 74). It is easy to decipher Herzog's skeptical attitude towards the modernist ideologies like existentialism, absurdism, the Marxist's utopianism and the apocalypse. The world has enough philosophies, thought currents and explanations. But they have contributed nothing good to Herzog and hence he distrusts philosophy and the theories of the culture-manufacturing thinkers of the world. While the theme of history and memory are outlined in the letter to General Eisenhower *(H,* 168 - 169) quoting profusely from Tolstoi, Pascal and G.W.F. Hegel, Herzog's mind takes on odd jump into the "Random association" (*H,* 189) and writes to Spinoza.

Herzog encountered a "spiritually confused age" *(H,* 64) dominated by agencies like deceitful lawyers, conspiring friends and unfriendly psychiatrists threatening sanity. The psychological conflict and the resultant dilemma almost takes him to a realm of craziness. Among the female characters, Ramona is the single character trying to transform his miseries. She "turned his grief in a useful direction" *(H,* 164). She was

the only female friend with whom he had transparent communication and he recognized the restorative quality of her responses. Naturally Ramona recognized the strength in him. "But you - you aren't the kind of a man a woman feels sorry for. You aren't weak, whatever else. You have enough strength..." *(H*, 207).

Madeleine with the vileness of a Fatal Woman occasionally confused him in the same way as the other reality instructors Gersbach, Himmelstein and Simkin. Under their tutelage he experiences only nausea and is burdened and weighed down by "the unbearable intensity of ideas" *(H*, 290). Madeleine is different from the Jews in her devotion and attachments, and her conversion to Christianity was not taken as a serious phase by Herzog. Her adulterous affair with his intimate friend Valentine Gersbach finally results in divorce and disgrace. "His friend, his former friend, Valentine, and his wife, his former wife Madeleine, had spread the rumour that his sanity had collapsed" *(H*, 8).

More interested in reading murder mysteries and books on suppression of minority views "her entire psychological orientation is towards violence and destruction" (Goldman, 1983:139). Madeleine and Ramona Donsella appear as a pair of opposites of femininity. The novel as a whole deals with similar opposite notions like sanity and madness, urban

landscape and rural setting. The depiction of the female situation in *Herzog* can be analysed on the basis of the male-female dichotomy which is an important feature of the Jewish element in Bellow. Though Jonathan Wilson is overenthusiastic to interpret *Herzog* as a misogynistic text, all the female characters in the novel cannot be equated with the manipulative "murderess" *(H,* 262) Madeleine, the architect of Herzog's disintegration. His attitude towards Ramona and Sono also differs. Ramona, the priestess of sensuality effected a change of heart in him with ritualistic and dramatic entertainments.

Ramona takes care of the sick Herzog, offers him asylum and tries to reassure his masculinity and intelligence. "She thought that she could restore order and sanity to his life, and if she did that it would be logical to marry her" *(H,* 193). And Herzog was exhilarated with supreme joyousness when she "quoted him Cattulus and the great love poets of all times. And the classics of psychology. And finally the Mystical Body" *(H,* 209). Though love acts as a panacea, Herzog never surrenders totally to Ramona.

Her idea of family behaviour is appreciated and the Herzogian dilemma is diluted with eloquent consolations. This well educated flower shop owner of Lexington Avenue gave him "wine, music, flowers,

sympathy, gave him room, so to speak in her soul and finally the embrace of her body" *(H*, 207). She occasionally reminded him of Madeleine's strange creatureliness, who is now "nothing but a packaged beauty" *(H*, 205) to Herzog. There is the image of sensual woman represented through Sono, Zinka, Wanda and Ramona trying to yield sensual pleasures. "She, Ramona wanted to add riches to his life and give him what he pursued in the wrong place. This she could do by the art of love, she said – the art of love which was one of the sublime achievements of the spirit" *(H*, 192).

Extremely offensive nature of the female world contributes much to Herzog's dilemma and the dialectic of sex presented is from a male oriented point of view. In the social set up of the Jewish community, woman is assigned only a subordinate role and women in the shtetl were enslaved to the kitchen world.

"Authoritarian" *(H*, 100) Madeleine with specific masculine traits and Herzog with dominant feminine sentiments anticipate the role reversal technique employed in *Mr. Sammler's Planet* (1970). Unfortunately they had opposite tastes too; "He liked clean shirts, ironed handkerchiefs, heels on his shoes, all the things Madeleine despised" *(H*, 210). While Herzog was "peculiarly devoted to country life" *(H*, 125) and "solitary walks on the pond, in the woods" *(H*, 133-34) she preferred "one of those streets of

brick, semi-detached parochial houses in the dull wilderness of Queens borough, fussing over Communion dress" *(H*, 122 - 123).

Through this role reversal technique, Bellow insists on the illusive nature of reality. Reality is falsified and misrepresented and the spiritual aura of the vision is clarified by the idea of the veil of Maya distorting the essence of reality. Disintegration and mismanagement are other issues encountered by Herzog and the instability is caused both by the so called reality instructors and by his own associations with past masters and present investigators.

Madeleine's greatest ambition was to fall in love and she had her gimmicks which were adorable. "And when she has an audience and begins spellbinding, there's a kind of flat pass she makes with the palm of her hand, and her nose twitches like a little rudder and by and by one brow joins in and begins to rise, rise" *(H*, 198). She deserted Herzog for Gersbach the "one legged radio announcer" *(H*, 198) as the former was "overbearing, infantile, demanding, sardonic and a psychosomatic bully" *(H*, 199).

Mismanaged and manipulated by a scheming adulterous wife, finally Herzog was converted into a cuckold, a laughing stock and a suffering joker – a schlimazl of the Jewish folklore. Herzog meditates on

the tedium of courtship and complains that Madeleine married him "in order to trip him, bring him low, knock him sprawling and kick out his brains with a murderous bitch foot" *(H*, 100).

A morphological analysis of the Bellow fiction shows the dawn of a fresh awareness on the protagonists at the end. The protagonists emerge as enlightened and transformed Buddhas proceeding towards Nirvana. This is a recurrent pattern. This gradual transformation takes place both on spiritual and psychological levels. Very often, this realisation forces the protagonist to have a reappraisal of the already formulated image of an individual. A classic instance is how Herzog realises the conversion of Gersbach into a tender buffoon from that of a poisonous individual after watching the unexpected scene of tenderness and love – how Gersbach was tenderly bathing Junie, his daughter. The awareness that murder is not a panacea to overcome personal insults prompts Herzog to drop the meditated murder of Madeleine and her paramour Gersbach. It serves as a landmark in Herzog's psychological odyssey. "As soon as Herzog saw the actual person giving an actual bath, the reality of it, the tenderness of such a buffoon to a little child, his intended violence turned into theatre, into something ludicrous" *(H*, 265).

Thus this dramatic situation in the novel celebrates the ceremony of conversion from revenge to redemption. "What starts out as a novel of revenge–an element that is not dropped but is intensified in the first part of the novel–becomes more and more a novel of redemption" (Fuchs, 1992:130). Rejection of mental violence and brutality is an ample illustration of the humaneness in Herzog. In the coop of his privacy Herzog often indulged in meditating on violent actions against Madeleine – knocking her down, clutching her hair, dragging her screaming and flogging her to death. But "he rejected this mental violence, sighing" *(H*, 16). The projection of this incident as an ample instance of the humaneness is a pivotal part of Bellow's 'moral imaginary' – his vision of life which is life affirming.

A burdened and troubled hero oppressed by the weight of humiliation, Herzog finally is released from the weight of psychic torture and from masochistic impulses. Many of these conflicting situations were self-imposed ones resulting in Heideggarian 'angst' – a free floating anxiety. Just as Joseph in *Dangling Man* (1994) who finally volunteers himself to army, Herzog talks with his alter ego "Tu As Raison Aussi" and refuses to lead a disappointed life. This process of enlightenment

recognizable in the Bellow protagonists is part of a scheme – their sensibilities undergo a thorough revamping and a nascent transformed sensibility enables them to understand and appreciate the inner richness of the self. It is this awareness which helps Herzog to free himself from distractions. More than that through this process of distancing from the former self, he feels complacent and is ready for reconciliation.

The classic Hegalian concept that the spirit of our time is present in us by nature is convincingly delineated as a persistent theme in the novel. Herzog considers modern technological culture incapable of discovering the essential human qualities. His analysis and evaluation of human qualities force him to declare, "I am certain that here are human qualities still to be discovered" *(H*, 203). This optimistic vision is part of an awareness, which directs towards a positive life affirming faith.

In the idea centred novels of Bellow, the Jewish moral imagination plays a vital role, as his creative works explore the relation between life and death. As a moralist he enlists a sophisticated Jewish sensibility and establishes the need to live within the axial lines of life. The dignity of man, the inner life of the self and the innate goodness are glorified as vital human potentials. Bellow in an interview with David Boroff points out that his intention in *Herzog* is essentially to affirm humanistic values.

"In writing *Herzog* I felt that I was completing a certain development, coming to the end of a literary sensibility. This sensibility implies a certain attitude towards civilization – anomaly, estrangement, the outsider, the collapse of humanism" (Boroff, 1964:39).

It is the love of ideas and his desperate quest for self that finally place Herzog in a prophetic tradition. The very name Moses Elkanah Herzog has associations with the prophet Moses, and Elkanah designates a person possessed by God. Herzog's final exclamation "-here I am. Hineni" *(H*, 317) at the end of his quest echoes and conjures up the Biblical image of Moses answering: "Hineni— 'Here am I' " (Exodus 3:4) to the Lord. "Of all the American Jewish writers of the last few years, Bellow is not merely the most gifted so far, but the most serious—and the most Jewish in his seriousness" *(H*owe, 1973:136).

The preciousness of human life is established through the life affirming proclamations. Through this the final image of a Shyaner Yid (a beautiful Jew) is emerged. This final image also emphasizes the redemptive value of sufferings, which has spiritual (canosis) and psychological (purgatory) dimensions. An element of robust optimism instead of the earlier masochistic and defeatist self pity is the dominant controlling emotion. This helps him to put an end to the psychic

convulsions. Thus the reconciliatory tone and the resultant transcendental elegance radiating from the novel singles out it from the postmodern genre. When the power turns on in Berkshire it indicates a symbolic reawakening. The resultant light and warmth are indicative of the enlightened self of the protagonist. This final transcendence enables Herzog to relax and laugh after releasing himself from the anguish. The breaker of ideas is transformed into a reconciliator.

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## Chapter IV

### Transcendence and Portrait of an Artist as a Quester

*Humboldt's Gift* (1975) is an acute depiction of the major sociological issue of the societal attitude towards aesthetic splendour and poetic sensibility. It explores how the psychic and private spheres are forced to surrender under pressures of a crass culture. Amidst such a "neurotic super drama" (*HG*, 149) Charlie Citrine's quest cum meditation helps him to diagnose the problematics of an artist in crisis. Even under pressures of public and personal crisis, Citrine asserts the possibility of draping the world in radiance. Affirmation through transcendence is the explicit concern focussed. Bellow consistently explores the possibility of affirmation and spiritual recovery. These ethical values are juxtaposed with a wasteland horror.

Bellow's vision directs towards an aesthetics of tension between the inner self and the outer reality. It is easy to decipher the two worlds of Citrine, the "harmonic world within his head and the discordant world outside" (Wilson, 1985: 161). The external world with gangsterisms, poker games and holidaying revels distort his private meditations. But Citrine is a clever "escape artist" (*HG*, 435) with an enormous power to endure humiliations and psychic torments.

Through the mode of transcendence and the method of self reflexive narration, the Bellow protagonist articulates the significance of affirmation. Along with the American success story and the spiritual issues of life, *Humboldts's Gift* (1975) concentrates how Citrine is influenced by the antagonist Humboldt both at aesthetic and spiritual levels. Humboldt, the mentor confuses, perplexes and disturbs Citrine along with the depressing Chicagoan nightmare. His meditation on Humboldt's failure is actually a probe into the failure of modern poetic sensibility. Citrine's quest takes place in the backdrop of his monitor's thorough disaster. Through his transcendental meditations Citrine tries to feel the intense faith in art and life. It should be borne in mind that his quest also probes the collapse of genuine poetic sensibility along with the problem of the self. Bellow perceives an abiding value in art as well as life. He emerges as a moralist and mystic endorsing faith in life and art. Even in an unfavourable cultural context, artists have to transcend the perilous failure of genuine imagination and real talents.

Decline of humanism and the erosion of poetic sensibility diminish the glory of the inner life. Citrine's quest and experiment take place in an American background of anarchy. The narrative structure has a sprawling pattern and it invariably presents opposing stances. This opposing feature

directs towards the relation between fiction and reality. Citrine initiates the process of narrating the fate of Humboldt, but gradually draws attention to narrating his own experiences and struggles in life. He thus becomes an autodiegetic narrator, placing himself in the protagonist situation. From this point of view the narration has a pattern presenting an ambiguous theme—success failure syndrome. Often his comments are not that of an eyewitness, but acts as an omniscient one. He recoils into an inner world of his own by indulging in meditations and is trying to create a personal mythology. This shift from the narrator situation to the position of a protagonist is a technical nuance with metafictional possibilities.

Bellow deliberately breaks the continuity of the remniscential narration and the flaw is often disrupted resulting in incoherence. Digressions mainly concentrate on intellectual ideas pertaining to death, transcendence, immortality of soul, ego and the quest motif. The dominant abstractions discussed are the pursuit of sensuality, sensibility versus material culture, illusion and reality, soul and ego, art versus anarchy, life versus death, the spiritual and the esoteric, visionary and intellectual, outer versus inner, the physical and the sensual. These juxtaposed contraries are analysed through the story of two artists—the Protagonist and the Antagonist. The rise and fall of a writer with stress on the serio-comic, if

not farcical element in the martyrdom of an artist overshadows these abstractions. Above all, the narration is concerned with the phenomenon of how one creative writer's tragic fate indirectly or directly catapults another artist's fame. Ironically, Citrine is basically a biographer earning livelihood from writing about the dead. "For I did write biographies and the deceased were my bread and butter" (*HG*, 116).

It is interesting to note that the tremendous success of the movie scenario proves that it is the dead Humboldt who bestows fame and money on Citrine. This unexpected legacy helps him to lead a contemplative life. Sarah Blacher Cohen suggests that " He (Citrine) is more interested in profiting spiritually than monetarily from his relationship" (1979:53) with the deceased.

The two literary figures, Von Humboldt Fleisher and Charlie Citrine represent two different sensibilities. While the mentor failed to realise the art of survival, Citrine, though indirectly, with the help of Humboldt realised it and transcends the distractions. Humboldt's decline as an artist in a hostile society is also due to the avoidance of reality. In the course of the meditation the tension between the aesthetic and the antiaesthetic creates a new vision. The basic opposition is that of the Platonic vision symbolised through Humboldt's genius versus the technological

materialistic vision of a superfluous vein. Destructive rationalism of the modern technology has caused the exhaustion of the inner life as well as the failure of the poetic sensibility. With the tough and rugged overpowering reality, American artists exist submitting to cannibalistic society.

From the thematic plane the novel accommodates various issues. "Art and money, sex and death, above all the tension between the modern world of the cash – and – culture nexus and that of the Platonic universe to which art traditionally is supposed to relate, are the dominant themes of the novel" (Bradbury, 1982:87). But the most serious concern is the outright rejection of the aesthetics of an artistic sensibility. Narration examines how modern American society with an adverse culture manufacturing technique, devalues creativity and poetic talent. In such a social set up the fate of artist in quest of success is very crucial. It articulates how in the present context, a writer in society is transformed into a literary martyr. Peter Hyland comments on the richness and complexity of the novel:

> It is built out of a wide range of themes and preoccupations, and functions on many levels, but among its central concerns is the status of the artist in the modern technocratic – business world. This question is explored through a number of

> interconnected issues: the agony of the individual poet in a mass society, the relationship between art and business, the relationship between the spiritual and the material, the dislocation of modern American culture from its European history, the importance of memory, the meaning of love, the future of the soul. (1992: 79)

In the modern context an artist has to strive a lot for survival against a hostile and indifferent society where "the might of money and the entanglement of art with it" (*HG*, 340) controls the fate.

Humboldt's literary career flourished during the 1940s and was the leader of the avant-garde movement. With the publication of his monumental volume of poems *Harlequin Ballads,* he set a new style in American poetry. But the money crazy Humboldt's interest in the modern "normal American interest" (*HG*, 15) wiped out the literary artist in him. The visionary states of the divine artist declined gradually. His art dwindled—madness and mental crisis converted him to a paranoic. Finally, he succumbed to a squalid death in a New York flophouse.

"Citrine's quest gains transcendental proportions, for, his effort is to revive the dead Humboldt through his reminiscences, his dreams of the dead and his monologues" (Nair, 2000: 10). Charles Citrine, the

protagonist is a successful writer at fifty-six "losing his grip on life" (*HG*, 8). Author of a popular Broadway hit *Von Trenck* and Pulitzer prize winner, historian and biographer, Citrine has been very popular. But he is suffering and plagued by the consequences of success. In spite of an expensive life style and popular success, Citrine's life undergoes a radical shift.

The narrative present of the novel is the short span of a period of five months— from December 1973 to April 1974. In a rather confessional tone Citrine accounts the fading away of his physical and mental powers. He is weighed down with a Hendersonian anxiety over death.

Further, his troubled relationship with a beautiful mistress Renata Koffritz, the alimony battle and law suits triggered by the ex-wife Denise and a "woman-filled Life" (*HG*, 111) drained away his money. Citrine is distracted by the sensual pleasures and his friend Pierre Thaxter persuades him to indulge in a literary venture—to set up a journal titled *The Ark.* Mafioso gangsterism, poker game losses, gambling debts, agents of distraction like Rinaldo Cantabile invade Citrine's crystalline self. He owes a huge sum of amount to publishers who have advanced money for books, which he will never write. His "mental life is going to dry out"

(*HG*, 43) and Citrine is sacrificing it to his "erotic needs" (*HG*, 43). He is transformed into an alienated and mentally unsettled character. "Further, he is intensely aware of approaching old age, to which he responds with an undignified attempt to cling to youth, and a growing preoccupation with death and the frustrating question of immortality" (Hyland, 1992: 80).

The cannibalistic society with money driven motives drives him to enact "The Agony of the American Artist" (*HG*, 156). Citrine was gradually becoming a mirror image of his benefactor. Citrine recapitulates the troubles in his life and tries to reconcile with the problem of death. His metaphysical fear and anxiety of death drives him towards a spiritual quest and tries to shed the death obsessions. Citrine resorts to anthroposophy to escape from the morbid anxiety and distress about the reality of death. He hopefully looks ahead for the next stage in the progress towards harmony.

Margaret Morganroth Gullette catalogues *Humbodlt's Gift* under "Bellow's life - course fiction" (1990: 52) along with *Henderson the Rain King* (1959) and *Herzog* (1964). These novels focus on the middle life crisis of "Henderson at fifty-five, Herzog at forty-seven, Charlie Citrine in the mid-fifties again" (Gullette, 1990:52). Further, they share a uniform sensibility of psychic trauma and display a common pattern—"the rising

pattern that Bellow had Herzog wistfully identify as 'steady progress from disorder to harmony' " (Gullette, 1990: 60).

Citrine's love for his late friend and interest in occult art force him to have an insight into the soul's journey. He seeks to explore the possibility of life after death as a means of seeking atonement and confession. His attempt is to avoid Humboldt's fate, by resorting to speculations on metaphysical ideas. Steiner's anthroposophy comes to his rescue to free him from the burden of selfhood. His next idea is to seek immortality by utilising the ideas of metempsychosis. The truth can be realised only through a quest and as a part of it Citrine memorializes his life. Acts of memory, love and sympathy alone can be used to fight against the world of distractions.

Citrine's inner vision is hampered and the loss of inner vision results in a spiritual sleep. How to transcend this spiritual sleep is an ethical issue. As a part of it he undergoes a process of 'waking up' resulting in moral transformation. He attempts to distinguish between illusion and reality. As a strategy for attaining transcendence over 'Maya' Citrine discards the fears of alienation and realises the meaningfulness of existence. Human existence is linked with the continued march of life and death is not finality. His metaphysical broodings on the phenomenal death

ends in the final realisation that death is a reality and it is not the termination of life. This spiritual and transcendentalist idea is an integral part of Bellow's 'moral imaginary'— his vision of life.

The humanistic stand of Bellow is evident when Citrine gradually emerges from this world of duskiness and the veils of maya into a clear realisation of the self. Citrine's meditative reflections on the life and death of Humboldt present the predicament of a writer in the modern context. Humboldt patronised Citrine and was introduced to a bohemian life almost enacting the life style of the master. The mentor even accused the disciple of stealing something from his personality. Citrine accounts his greatest ascend towards success:

> It was my turn to be famous and to make money, to get heavy mail, to be recognized by influential people, to be dined at Sardi's and propositioned in padded booths by women who sprayed themselves with musk, to buy Sea Island cotton underpants and leather luggage, to live through the intolerable excitement of vindication. (I was right all along!) I experienced the high voltage of publicity. It was like picking up a dangerous wire fatal to ordinary folk. It was like the

> rattlesnakes handled by hillbillies in a state of religious exaltation. (*HG*, 163)

After the estrangement between Humboldt and Citrine, the dark forces have started destroying the creative potential of Citrine's imagination. "Citrine finds himself practically re-living Humboldt's life: experiencing on his own Humboldt's ambition, jealousy, insomnia, his looniness and solitude, his struggle against authorities and even his arrest by police" (Eiland, 1981: 105-106).

Humboldt's death forces Citrine to form a new perspective of the world. A feeling of guilt haunts him. He is "gratuitously thriving on Humboldt's tragic decline" (Kim, 1994: 193). His success as a creative artist was due to the departed mentor. As pointed out by Robert J. Lifton, "his survival was purchased at the cost of another's" (1972: 517). Citrine nourishes the feeling that he did not show the moral obligation of helping his master. He could not save Humboldt from a pauperized death. The success failure syndrome also points to the idea of righteousness with its moral implications. Humboldt's impoverished death as a "hero of wretchedness" (*HG*, 155) and Citrine's callous indifferences are connected with a deep crisis in the literary world—how a materialistic culture ruins the creative talents of a true and inspired artist. With the "literary funeral

directors" (*HG*, 5) and the "abominable rich" (*HG*, 14), the attitude of the society towards artists is cannibalistic. The business world with its "power to petrify the soul" (*HG*, 4) is not different from the cannibalistic Kwakiutl Indians. A writer's predicament is to suffer like the candidate performing the initiation ceremony. "The candidate when he performs his initiation dance falls into a frenzy and eats human flesh. But if he makes a ritual mistake the whole crowd tears him to pieces" (*HG*, 14). Mark Bushy in a journal article considers *Humbodlt's Gift* (1975) as a novel about art and artist in America and identifies two classes of people in the novel, the castaways and cannibals. (1981: 91 – 94) The cannibal imagery is vital to the understanding of the world of artists delineated in the novel. Through the movie scenario with Caldofreddo as a "violent spectacular" (*HG*, 182) sinner, Bellow testifies how "fascist imperialist capitalist dogs devour each other. Only the proletariat knows morality brotherhood and self-sacrifice!" (*HG*, 181). The big-shot lawyer Maxie Pinsker is a "man-eating kike" (*HG*, 169). He symbolises the divorce-establishment system and Denise is trying to extract alimony through the "cannibal Pinsker" (*HG*, 169). Citrine experiences "the plastic and histrionic talents of the human creature" (*HG*, 89) on the squalid, closet at the Bath. Cantabile's

dramatization of the Zuckerman's apes at the London zoo reminds Mr. Sammler's encounter with the Black Negro.

Citrine's domestic tragedies are results of his high intellection. His life partner Denise exhibits signs of intolerance and divorces him. Geroge Swiebel notices an incongruity in the Citrine – Denise pair and feels that it is not possible to have a serious relationship. "You are not getting enough air with that woman. You look as if you're suffocating. Your tissues aren't getting any oxygen. She will give you cancer" (*HG*, 42).

Psychic disturbances and distractions force Citrine to indulge in contemplative meditations. Occasionally, these meditations result in epiphanic revelations. As a part of it Citrine experiences the process of transition, culminating in transcendence. "His epiphanic experiences takes place by way of memory, meditation and confrontation with death" (Kim, 1994:203).

He recapitulates the ecstatic love for Naomi Lutz in his "highly emotional adolescence" (*HG*, 76) and her image lingers still in mind as an eternal beloved. During that period he was "safely within life" (*HG*, 76). But "the mental burdens and responsibilities of an intellectual's wife had frightened her" (*HG*, 76 –77) and she deserted him for a gambler sportsman. Citrine nostalgically longs for a blessed life with Naomi Lutz.

"Fifteen thousand nights embracing Naomi and I would have smiled at the solitude and boredom of the grave. I would have needed no bibliography, no stock portfolios, no medal from the Legion of Honor" (*HG*, 77). After many years he pays a sentimental visit to Naomi Lutz and she remembers how Citrine "came down from Madison raving about that poet named Humboldt Park or something and borrowed my savings to go to New York on a Greyhound bus. I really and truly loved you, Charlie, but when you rolled away to see this god of yours, I went home and painted my nails and turned on the radio"(*HG*, 298-99).

Incidentally, Citrine's conversation leads to Demmie Vonghel's death and how she too became a cog in the machine of 'the significant dead'. Here Bellow interlocks the theme of love and death through a shift from Lutz to Vonghel. The female world is not concerned with Citrine's spiritual quest and upliftment of the self. They marry for wealth and prestige. Marriage and love are equated to money. Joseph F. McCadden holds the view that "In *Humboldt's Gift*, the sexual game is played with depressing seriousness for only money bonds a woman to a man and only sex binds a man to a woman" (1980: 206).

Citrine had to suffer the agony of exploitation from the ex-wife Denise and his mistress Renata, whose "intercontinental sobs were fresher

than other women's close at hand" (*HG*, 402). The emotional aspect of the wedlock is substituted by a craze for material comforts. They want to romance with wealth. Disintegrated family life denied an emotional comfort and stability to Citrine and his desire for a spiritual companionship was not materialised. The accidental death of Demmie Vonghel in an air crash denies a domesticated marriage. Citrine's emotional attachment to her forces him to search for her dead body in the jungle. Standing near the "Pacific throwing a fit of epilepsy against the shore" (*HG*, 300) unable to trace the dead body, Citrine slips into meditative thinking. "You can't always like the way in which the world was molded. Sometimes I think, Who wants to be an eternal spirit and have more existences!" (*HG*, 300).

Strolling along the Coney Island Broadwalk with Renata, Citrine remembers the pleasures of her sensuous disposition and the "energizing influences" (*HG*, 326) which "surged upward to the very root of my (Citrine's) teeth" (*HG*, 327). She is considered as a "voluptuous friend" (*HG*, 8) and fervently pleads to marry her claiming that she has kept his "sex power alive" (*HG*, 239). She had been weeping over the telephone, frantically requesting to change her position and status. "That's what I need. I'll make you a wonderful wife" (*HG*, 354).

Renata with 'exciting anxieties associated with erotic life" (*HG*, 235) goes to Milan and marries Flonzaley leaving her son with Citrine. For she is sure that Citrine with a strong family feeling will take care of her son. An epiphanic revelation is served through her farewell letter. She was never willing to share Citrine's intellectual pursuits and emotional traits. Though Joseph F. McCadden points out that "She is an obstacle to Citrine's spiritual rebirth" (1980:206) Citrine is fully aware of Renata's "Peculiar phantom" (*HG*, 406) quality. She has utter contempt for Citrine's spiritual and intellectual enterprises and even argues that it is "kinkiness" (*HG*, 432) to concentrate on women and mysticism simultaneously.

Isolating the issue of the artist's destiny, the narrative has tackled themes of quest, transcendence and other related abstractions. As in other works, Bellow pauses the problem of defining humaneness and the possibility of doing good to others. He insists that a sensitive writer, though under threats of distraction and temptation must not consider society as doomed. "Human qualities may appear suppressed in modern society, but they still exist, and artists have to look with their own eyes to discover them anew and make a clear estimate of the human condition" (Kulsrestha, 1978: 17).

Whether death is a finality apart from a certainty is another major concern that Citrine has to realise. Like Henderson, the anxiety of death and questions regarding soul and the existence of it after its earthly sojourn perplexes Citrine. Obsession with death along with a guilty conscience forces Citrine to review his past experiences.

Drawn towards occultist art and Steiner's world of transmigration of souls, Citrine tries to unravel the mystery behind death. His ultimate objective is to transcend death. He also wants to explore the aspects of the self and related questions. To Bellow, life "is intractable and mysterious" (Kulsrestha, 1976; 27) and under the garb of an artist's story, infuses philosophical postulations— transcendence and immortality of the self. "The anthroposophy of Rudolph Steiner," argues Eusebio L. Rodrigues "is an essential constituent of the epic comedy that is *Humboldt's Gift*" (1984: 105).

Charlie Citrine's quest is for self-discovery, for salvation and for realising the meaning of existence. These spiritual and mystical concerns are analysed drawing ideas from anthroposophy, medieval mysticism and American transcendentalism. "Emersonian transcendentalism is thematically more important to the novel than Steiner's anthroposophism" (Morovitz, 1996: 84). There is close parallelism between Emerson's

method of "egocentric device" (Morovitz, 1996: 86) of using 'I', 'Myself,' and 'me' and Bellow's "use of the first person singular in narrating his (Citrine's) recollections" (Morovitz, 1996: 86). This "self reflectiveness" (Morovitz, 1996: 67) is evident in the heavy dosage of 'I'.

The view of death taken by most of the people is not acceptable to Citrine. "On aesthetic grounds," he argues out, "I am obliged to deny that so extraordinary a thing as a human soul can be wiped out forever" (*HG*, 141). In the transcendental meditations he asserts that "we are free on earth because of cloudiness, because of error, because of marvelous limitation, and as much because of beauty as of blindness and evil" (*HG*, 141).

As a part of his spiritual exercise in spirit-recollection, Citrine penetrates into the philosophical dimensions of soul. This is to "recognize the connection between the self and the divine powers" (*HG*, 143). As in *Herzog, Humboldt's Gift* also follows the pattern of evolving a reintegrated self through a process of interaction with a chaotic situation. In their quest for recovering the lost inner self, both Herzog and Citrine try to communicate even with the dead. While Citrine resorts to the loud reading of Steiner's texts as part of the communicado, Henderson frantically

indulges in playing the violin to contact the departed parents. The long mysterious conversations on esoteric subjects with Dr. Schelds thrilled Citrine. Books on "the etheric and, the astral bodies, the Intellectual Soul and the Consciousness Soul, and the unseen Beings whose fire and wisdom and love created and guided this universe" (*HG*, 260) entertained him. Peter Hyland holds the view that Steiner's ideas are presented as "part of Citrine's meditative escape from the moronic inferno, giving him the same kind of imaginative consolation as his memories of Humboldt" (1992:86).

There was intense friendship and mutual aesthetic appreciation between Citrine and Humboldt. They cherished a common dream of combining "worldly success with poetic integrity" (*HG*, 351). Amidst the distressing factors of life, Citrine is further haunted by the memory of Von Humboldt Fleisher. His vivid recollections of the literary contributions of his benefactor are suggestive of the intensity of the bond of friendship. This recollections of the marvelous revelries of the past, like a dramatist and historian is essential for a sane and meaningful survival for Citrine. "My own belief was that without memory existence was metaphysically injured, damaged" (*HG*, 244).

They even sign a contract to be "blood-brothers" (*HG*, 130) and "entered into a covenant" (*HG*, 130) by exchanging signed "Corn Exchange checks" (*HG*, 130). But when Citrine won a Pulitzer for a play, Humboldt accused him of infusing his personality traits into the hero. He even complained of Citrine conspiring with Kathleen. The play *Von Trenck* ran for eight months on Broadway and it brought him fame and immense fortune. Consequently Citrine became a "new born success" (*HG*, 51) in the literary world and Humboldt was "a fiery Failure" (*HG*, 51). Other writers and detractors ignored him. "Poet, thinker, problem drinker, pill-taker, man of genius, manic depressive, intrictate schemer, success story, he once wrote poems of great wit and beauty, but what had he done lately? " (*HG*, 25).

But Humboldt descended into madness, was ultimately locked in Bellevue. A frightful picture appeared in the obituary page. "Humbodlt, ruined, black and grey, a disastrous newspaper face staring at me (Citirne) from death's territory" (*HG*, 54). Meditating on the madness of his patron, Citrine in a tone of regret speaks: "I wasn't doing so well myself recently when Humboldt acted from the grave, so to speak and made a basic change in my life. In spite of our big fight and fifteen years of estrangement he left me something in his will. I came into a legacy"(*HG*, 6).

Humboldt, who was "like a person from a painting" (*HG*, 54) during the hours of fame, gradually ruined himself. "The Mozart of conversation" (*HG*, 13) was finally passing through "ruinous disorders" (*HG*, 5) both at physical and intellectual levels. The maturity of this "great entertainer" (*HG*, 6) was melting and he was speeding towards the grave. "He chased ruin and death even harder than he had chased women" (*HG*, 117–18). Humboldt's decline symbolically alludes to the triumph of sensuality over intellectual in a society controlled by luxury. "May be America didn't need art and inner miracles. It had so many outer ones" (*HG*, 6). Citrine places the fate of artists against the "universal American recompense" (*HG*, 50) and presents the theme of the terrific failure in a land of success.

Citrine frequently refers to the image of Humboldt looking from death's territory—a "precious friend, hid in death's dateless night" (*HG*, 110). He withdraws from the comedy of errors and prepares for a spiritual, life. Contemplation and spiritual meditation on the "ecstatic connection" (*HG*, 477) with his benefactor quickened the process of attaining inner peace. This act of reconciliation along with the reminder "we are not natural beings but supernatural beings" (*HG*, 347) reinforce the mysterious bond of human relationship. Citrine realises the nobility behind forgiveness and this culminates in a spiritual reawakening—a pathway to

transcendence. He could easily decipher a "concealed divinity" (*HG*, 294) and radiance in his mentor.

Human beings are oblivious of another plane of existence higher than the 'here' life. "Nearly all of the world's ancient mythologies and religions have had the concept of the dead still being alive in another dimension and exerting a continuing influence on the living" (Spivey, 1985: 8). "The heavy weight of selfhood" (*HG*, 10) blocks the spiritual journey towards an understanding of life. Obsession with the selfhood will be a hindrance to attain "higher wakefulness" (*HG*, 396). It is this higher wakefulness that results in the realisation that "Soul belongs to a greater an all-embracing life outside" (*HG*, 332). Citrine achieves this spiritual transcendence through epiphanic experiences.

'Light' is a metaphor for soul and Citrine accounts how he "received light" (*HG*, 177) when he was admitted in a T.B. Sanatorium. "I connected breathing with joy and owing to the gloom of the ward I connected joy with light, and owing to my irrationality I related light on the walls to light inside me" (*HG*, 65). His experience was "formative and defining" (Wilson, 1985: 1180). Sudden illuminations result in the feeling of weightlessness and "sprinting through the star world" (*HG*, 221).

Bellow also assigns purifying powers to light and in *To Jerusalem and Back* (1976) light is referred to be the "outer garment of God" (*JB,* 93). Initiation into the Steinerian concepts liberates Citrine from experiencing the "suffocating grave or dreading an eternity of boredom" (*HG*, 220 – 21).

Regarding the delineation of Steiner's doctrines of the immortality of soul and anthroposophism in the novel, Daniel Fuchs considers the topic as "sophisticated ironies" (1992: 251). Despite the comic element in the treatment of Steinerian concepts, Bellow in an interview with Joseph Epstein points out that "Rudolph Steiner had a great vision and was a powerful poet as well as philosopher and scientist" (1976:93).

Dr. Rudolf Steiner's argument is that between the conception of an act and its execution by the will there fell a gap of sleep (*HG*, 109). Citrine's act of showing loyalty to the deceased is part of overcoming lethargy. He gets "the idea of doing something with the chronic war between sleep and consciousness" (*HG*, 108). Citrine placed under circumstances like "Renata, Denise, children, courts, lawyers, Wall Street, sleep, death, metaphysics, karma, the presence of the universe in us, our being present in the universe itself" (*HG*, 110) was "cracking under

strain"(*HG*, 110). He could not pause to think about Humboldt, the "precious friend hid in death's dateless night" (*HG*, 110).

"Death moods" (*HG*, 115) maddened Citrine and to Denise he was a "cemetery bit" (*HG*, 115) and had come back to Chicago as his parents were buried there. The inner voice demanded to pursue the desire in full wakefulness. Citrine's evaluation of the failed friend Von Humboldt Fleisher "who had never been able to struggle through into higher wakefulness" (*HG*, 396) forces Citrine to declare his responsibility of fulfilling his own destiny. "Of course I had a big thing to wake up to, a very big challenge. Now I was only simmering, still, and it would be necessary at last to come to a full boil" (*HG*, 396).

As a part of the theme of sleep versus wakefulness, there is the Rip Van Winkle episode. The curtain raiser metaphorically celebrates the raising of Citrine's vision to an illuminating plane of wakefulness. With "light" as the central symbol, the narration alludes to how he is illumined to formulate a new vision—a vision permeated with love and eternity. This Christmas pageant ultimately leads Citrine to meditate on sleep and asks himself. "What would I have done if I hadn't been asleep in spirit for so long? " (*HG*, 293). Drawing inferences from Dr. Scheldt, Citrine points out: "Our unwillingness to come out of the state of sleep was the

result of a desire to evade an impending revelation. Certain spiritual beings must achieve their development through men, and we betray and abandon them by this absenteeism, this will - to- snooze"(*HG*, 293).

Here is a sample from Citrine's mental processes through which he establishes the soul's returning to the body when one awakens from sleep. "Now, Naomi, as I was lying stretched out in America, determined to resist its material interests and hoping for redemption by art, I fell into a deep snooze that lasted for years and decades" (*HG*, 306)

The clash between the world of distraction and the world of contemplation indicates the inner tension raging in Citrine's mind. This tension between flux and stability is a favourite Bellovian theme uniformally perceived in the novels with survivor protagonists.

Citrine tries to recapture the childhood world of innocence and light. His concept of an inner world with order is established against an outer world of chaos. This inner "harmonic world" (Wilson, 1985: 161) is placed against a "discordant world outside" (Wilson, 1985: 161). But as pointed out by Jonathan Wilson "Whatever is happening to him (Citrine) in the external world seems almost irrelevant to what is going on inside him" (1985: 160).

Citrine attaches importance to the life of the mind, while his detractors represent brutalities of a fallen world. To him the physical world is veiled by Maya and his attempt is to break the "painted veils of Maya" (*HG*, 3) to enter the "higher worlds" (*HG*, 291). And Citrine captures this idea of "domes of many- colored glass staining the white radiance of eternity, quivering in the intense inane and so on" (*HG*, 3) from Humboldt.

At times his consciousness is akin to the city squalor and the success as an artist intoxicates him. This results in aborting the light of his soul and veils his vision. To rededicate to spiritual inquiries, Citrine has to strive against this veiled vision. The ideas of sleep versus awakening are incorporated in the narration through Citrine's meditations on these contraries. His contemplations result in epiphanic revelations—a sort of psychic movements resulting in bursting the spirit's sleep. "These sudden illuminations" (Kim, 1994: 217) have mystical aspects and the paddle dream epiphany "marks Citrine's progress in search for an authentic vision" (Kim, 1994: 216). Steiner, the founder of anthroposophy is an Austrian scientist, artist and philosopher. His concept of a sleep soul is given an artistic dimension of near death experience. This delusion of unkillable and a sense of mortality are treated as mystical questions. Bellow insists for the need of a redeeming frame for human life. Human

qualities are veiled in modern society and they also lie dormant. This spiritual sleep results in the draining of the inner life. One can achieve maturity only through breaking this spiritual sleep.

Citrine thought that Kathleen "too was coming out of a state of spiritual sleep" (*HG*, 376). This feeling forces him to formulate a series of serious questions of metaphysics. "Why slumber sealed people's spirits. Why waking was so convulsive, and whether she thought that the spirit could move independently of the body and if she felt that there might not be a kind of consciousness that need no biological footing" (*HG*, 376). He expected Kathleen to share his views and discuss "supersensible consciousness and democracy's great poem of death" (*HG*, 376).

Daniel Fuchs commenting on the religious aspect of the novel observes that "there is no mention of Steiner or anthroposophy in early" (1992: 238) manuscripts though "Bellow thinks of Citrine as religious" (1992: 238). The world of distraction is purgatorial to Citrine. The visions and experiences are part of the essentialities for Citrine's process of cleansing. This spiritual and moral regeneration is salvation, which results in the formation of a redeeming vision. And this vision erases the false selfhood in Citrine.

Chicago, the slaughter city with the money – driven Mafiaso, is a "moronic inferno" (*HG*, 35) and the "cannibal society" (*HG*, 14) protects downright hooliganism and wretchedness. Rinaldo Cantabile, the mafia gangster threatens Citrine to repay a poker debt. Citrine was forced to travel around Chicago just to impress Cantabile's friends. This association with the mafia gangsterism is one stage of the purgatorial existence, Chicago figuratively transformed into an inferno. Daniel Fuchs, analysing the manuscripts points out that "the novel was a fusion of two separate novels, one about Humboldt and New York, one about Sweibal and Cantabile and Chicago" (1992: 233).

Citrine as a youth goes to New York to gain the great world, but finally dashes back to Chicago to escape from the disappointing world city experience. Cantabile's revengeful act of smashing Citrine's Mercedez Benz car with the baseball bat is symbolic. Actually Citrine has identified the "shimmering motor car" (*HG*, 35) as an extension of his own self. It is an enactment of the moronic inferno trying to fracture and disengage the creative imagination. Uncle Waldemar informs how the cops had rolled Humboldt and snatched away "even his fountain pen" (*HG*, 16). This act also symbolises the blowing out the artist in the individual. "He

(Humboldt) always used a real pen. He didn't write poetry with a ball-point" (*HG*, 16).

Cantabile the "wheeler-dealer made criminal" (Fuchs, 1992: 242) in the original manuscript was bestowed with "rougher edges" (Fuchs, 1992: 242). Almost all the adverse remarks are eliminated in the final draft except "his toilet disinfectant business" (Fuchs, 1992: 242). Jeanne Braham holds that "Both Cantabile and Humboldt are 'fathers' to Charlie: the first schools him in the world of power and money; the latter represents the fate of the artist in America. Both are sources of guilt and confusion to Citrine, and both leave legacies that connect Charlie to salvation" (1984: 73).

Citrine occasionally feels that he is surrounded by the "gallery – owners" (*HG*, 60) of the Chicago cult. Those "mental beau monde of Chicago" (*HG*, 59) deny light, good and the beautiful. Under the webs of power lines in the industry city, the gamblers were flashing cards, and bursting irrationally. The fateful poker game was organized around undertakers, hoodlums, hooligans and tuxedo-rental businesspersons. And amidst this quixotic gang, Citrine who "was knighted by the French government" (*HG*, 60) and "whose name was in the reference books" (*HG*, 60) showed himself off as part of this "great public relations" (*HG*, 61). It

was only another phase in the enactment of the life of Von Humboldt Fleisher.

But the "Chicago blood-hierarchy" (*HG*, 64) does not depress Citrine. He tries to have a "metaphysical premise of universal helpfulness asserting that the appearance of mankind on this earth was on the whole a good thing" (*HG*, 64), an idea shared by Mr. Sammler and Herzog. Commenting on Bellow's critique of the intellect, Bruce J. Borrus says: "It should not be surprising that Saul Bellow, our novelist most concerned with the relation between ideas and life, worries about the place of the intellectual in contemporary America, a society that prizes its achievers while it patronizes and occasionally pities its thinkers" (1979: 29).

The mystical element very transparent in the narration points towards a serious one rather than an absurdist stance. Earthly life is exposed to receive the impressions of eternity. This mystical aspect of earthy life also endorses the idea of another plane of existence awaiting mankind. Death becomes meaningful as it transports the soul to a transcendental reality beyond the grave.

The spiritual world is envisaged, as an invisible supersensible entity. Citrine, while listening to the inner "voice of his own mind speaking from within" (*HG*, 86) feels that Humboldt also is trying to communicate from

beyond the grave. With the ideas of a 'hereafter' and 'the significant dead' Citrine believes in the immortality of soul and cherishes the idea of meeting the immortal souls of his friends. He fervently craves for, and is of course hopeful of meeting Humboldt, his parents and the significant dead Demmie Vonghel on the shores of eternity. This deep conviction regarding the indestructible nature of the human soul echoes strains of eastern philosophy—the triumph of the spirit over sheer material existence.

Against the enlightening background of epiphanic revelatory scenes, there is the progression towards attaining the excellence of the self. This spiritual upliftment of the self is an urgent human concern in the present world order. The basic issues central to the demoralizing and dehumanizing of the modern 'self' depicted in Bellow's earlier works reappear in *Humboldt's Gift.* "The first half of the book presents pictures of the inferno, juxtaposing the fallen world of Chicago with the inner state of the protagonist" (Kim, 1994: 186).

Citrine's epiphany is often associated with physical experiences and sensations. "Sipping whisky, feeling the radiant heat that rose inside, I experienced a bliss that I knew perfectly well was not mad" (*HG*, 313). Epiphanic revelations impart a sense of transcendental reality. These

revelatory scenes help Citrine to service and achieve self-knowledge, truth of life and redemption. "As in *Henderson the Rain King* and *Herzog,* Citrine's epiphanic experiences takes place by way of memory, meditation and confrontation with death" (Kim, 1994; 203).

Citrine claims the power of thinking as a source of freedom and physical body as "an engine and reflection of the spirit" (*HG*, 262). After Humboldt's death, he occupies Citrine's inner world, as the departed artist becomes the center of meditation. "This is Humboldt's real gift to his disciple: in his attempts to understand the meaning of Humboldt's failed life, Citrine begins to see the meaning of his own 'successful' career" (Hyland, 1992; 82).

As a part of transcendence, "meditating Charlie Citrine attempts to shut out the distracting world" (Opdahl, 1979: 24). The final realisation of the mystery of his being is achieved also through religious experiences. Citrine's religious experiences can be examined from the Zen Buddhistic and Judeo- Christian perspectives. Commenting on the Zen Buddhist element Kyung - Ae Kim points out: "There is a striking affinity between Steinerian meditation and Dhyana, the Zen Buddistic kind of meditation. In Zen, dhyana is an essential means to arrive at satori or prajna-wisdom"(1994: 204).

Citrine is engaged in a quasi-religious and mystical quest for spiritual salvation. He resorts to the strategy of meditation to avoid victimizing moments. This is evident from his contemplation from the skyscrapers. "I sat there recalling certain marvelous facts about the sun, namely, that the light of other stars when it entered the sun's gravitational field, had to bend. The sun wore a shawl made of this universal light " (*HG*, 97).

The transcendental element is linked with the problem of finding out a solution to salvage a tottering self. Bellow's vision thus recognizes the illuminating nature of the Jewish, Russian mystics along with ideas from Meister Eckhart, Rudolph Steiner, Dane, Goethe and Blake.

Behind the spiritual and moral dimensions of Bellovian fiction, there is the explicit overtone of Indic thoughts and ideas. Citrine's yogic exercise to "recover calm and seeking stability" (*HG*, 47) and "the fringe of the Nirvana" (*HRK*, 88) associated with light imagery establish the strain of Indian thoughts. The recurrent concepts like maya, karma, guru, chandala and kamasutra dream girl further establish the tinge of Indian thoughts. Citrine's definition of karma as "paying for the evil of a past life in this one" (*HG*, 171) and the reference to 'maya' as painted veil and "the deluded human scene" (*HG*, 373) are further observations steeped in

oriental philosophy. The Steinerian notions regarding death and immortality have close affinity with the Indian concept of the cycles of birth and rebirth.

Bellow has infused the Steinerian doctrine with the idea of the ecstatic connection through flaming love. Humboldt in his letter expresses his deep concern for the disciple. "Be sure that, if there is a hereafter I will be pulling for you" (*HG*, 347).

Judaism values certain moral obligations as ethical. Citrine tries to redeem himself and becomes a *mensch* (Good Man) through *massiv tovim* (Acts of Goodness). Burying the dead, comforting the mourner and visiting the sick are moral obligations insisted by the Jewish Canon. As an altruistic gesture, Citrine postpones a pleasure junket in fear of the death of his brother and visits Ulick admitted for open-heart surgery in Texas. When Pierre Thaxter was abducted in Argentina by terrorists, Citrine shows his overenthuiasm to release him from the kidnappers. Thaxter's captivity oppressed him and it made him "grieve at heart to imagine him locked in a black cellar with rats and terrified of torture" (*HG*, 471). Another instance is Citrine's financial assistance to Humboldt's uncle. He settles the old man in an apartment for the aged. The most important obligation towards Humboldt is the reburial ceremony; a decent burial to

Humboldt and his mother side by side in new graves at the Valahalla cemetery. The funeral service performed is to seek forgiveness from Humboldt and through performing a moral obligation; the crisis in his life is resolved. And as Roger Shattuck observes "Somehow, we are to understand, Citrine will place himself back within life" (1975: 25). He also attempts to retrieve the dead body of his love Demmie Vonghel, killed in an air crash. Through these acts of obligations, Citrine escapes from a purgatorial existence, and transcends to a glorious higher plane.

Kyung- Ae Kim's observation of the satirical element in the reburial scene actually ignores the burial rituals followed in the Jewish tradition. Far from the "satire directed against today's mechanical, technological treatment of death" (Kim, 1994: 230) this funeral function has deep religious connotations. The funeral service reenacted is part of Citrine's attempt to seek forgiveness from Humboldt. It also functions as all such ceremonies do, to speed the dead on their journey towards another higher plane of rehabilitation.

In the pre Steinerian stage, Citrine was afraid of death; graveyards and he never attended funerals. At the Russian Bath, the bearded stranger talks to Father Sweibal about "Cryts tombs and mausoleums" (*HG*, 195). The final series of frenzied questions on death, burial, cemeteries,

headstones, brass plates and reburial torments the old man. This vision of death with "the glittering brass of nameless nameplates" (*HG*, 196) instills intense death anxieties in Citrine. At this time he couldn't "even attend funerals" (*HG*, 196) and the anxiety is aggravated when he reads a newspaper report of "heap of empty caskets near the crematory of a cemetery" (*HG*, 196 - 97). The very "thought of being screwed into a box" (*HG*, 196) frightens Citrine and he "couldn't bear to see the coffin shut" (*HG*, 196). He was neurotic about stifling in the grave" (*HG*, 197).

But in the final scene of reburial, along with Waldamar and Menasha, Citrine boldly reconciles with the situation. Now he has accepted his own mortality and is free from the dread of death. All of them anticipate death, as it will help to unite with the loved ones. While flying through the "unshadowed heights" (*HG*, 406) in an illuminated 747 plane, Citrine's mind was raging along with "the Atlantic in pale daylight raging below" (*HG*, 405). He was ruminating over the bungled life of Humboldt. "I felt also that Humboldt, out there in death, stood in need of my help. The dead and the living still formed one community" (*HG*, 405).

Humboldt's letter, the gift from a creative artist leads Citrine to realise "a world of Imagination and Vision" (*HG*, 347). More than an act of love it helps him to follow "The Light" (*HG*, 177). On the literal level

the gift alludes to the script of a scenario that saves Citrine from the financial crisis and nagging situations. Metaphorically, the 'gift' refers to Humboldt's poetic genius, which was blocked and thwarted. The deceased genius proves to be very loyal to Charlie Citrine. After freeing himself from all entanglements, Citrine progresses towards stability, order and sanity of mind. Humboldt's legacy to Citrine establishes the eternal tradition of poetic sensibility—the never-ending flow of creative imagination. Apart from Art, the legacy asserts the undying nature of humanity, behind all human acts, thoughts and sentiments. "Be sure that if there is a hereafter I will be pulling for you" (*HG*, 347). Humboldt's letter cautions the lazy, disgraceful and tougher aspects of Citrine. But tries to console him through asserting that Citrine is "not yet a dead loss" (*HG*, 347).

"Bellow's vision has widened its spectrum to take in the full mystery of human life. The two essential elements of his dynamic vision are the powerful forces of love and the human imagination" (Rodrigues, 1984:105). Citrine, throughout the course of the narration reiterates the statement 'I always loved him' and this signals the idea that somewhere, somehow Humboldt do exist. Those whom we love do exist.

Humboldt's gift in the form of a legacy resurrects Citrine. But it demands him to be a successor to Humboldt and as such it is Citrine's obligation to carry on the unfulfilled task left behind. Indirectly the gift becomes a boon and a burden. The juxtaposed contraries accumulated in the novel are present even in the title.

Bellow's novels document certain personal experiences. Depiction of the betrayal by female characters, divorce, legal quarrels, suits and counter suits are relevant to his personal life. "Many personalities in *Humboldt's Gift* are a pastiche of recognizable counterparts in reality, as well as characters familiar from Bellow's fiction.... Denise is created out of Sondra Bellow and Susan Bellow, as well as out of Madeleine and Lily" (Miller, 1991:204).

*Herzog* deals with the story of divorce and Madeleine Herzog is the fictional counterpart of Alexander Tachacbsov. After the first divorce of Anita Goshkin, Bellow married Tachacbsov and were living in Trivoli. The same autobiographical strain is traceable in *Humboldt's Gift* with the portrait of Von Humboldt Fleisher and Denise Citrine as fictionalized versions of Delmore Schwartz and Susan Glassman respectively. Benjamin Solan refers to *Humboldt's Gift as* "the memorialization and exploitation of Delmore Schwartz" (1991:25). He refers to the parallelism

between the relationship of Bellow and Shwartz in the narration. "As a literary event *Humbold's Gift* is at once Saul Bellow's apology for using Delmore Schwartz's life and thought in his work" (Solan, 1991:25).

Joseph Cohen observes an obvious link between the real life plight of Bellow and Citrine's fictional one. "At the same time bellow wrote *Humboldt's Gift* he was engaged in a particularly acrimonious divorce proceedings through out which Susan Glassman, his third wife, sought a large settlement" (1983:54).

But Bellow fiction as such cannot be considered as a reliable documentation of the author's real life. He has "maintained the required aesthetic distance between autobiography and fiction" (Cohen, 1983:55).

A faint echo of the Arnoldian elegiac note in the depiction of the Scholar Gypsy is observable in Citrine's meditation on the inner falsehood. The basic challenge before Humboldt was to reconcile a platonic vision with the spiritual aridity and emotional bankruptcy of a utilitarian culture. " What to do about talent in this, in this age. How to prevent the leprosy of souls" (*HG*, 136). These unsolved dilemmas of Citrine's "stout inspired pal" (*HG*, 136) still exist to vex and agonise creative artists.

A genuine poet like Humboldt Fleisher falls a victim and a mediocre artist like Citrine marches along with success, though both of them

encounter the same social reality. Citrine's success story authenticates the collapse of high and serious art in America. He was relieved from pains and troubles and saved by money from the tremendously popular movie scenario about Amundson and Nobile and Caldofreddo, the cannibal. Bellow implies the theatricality of a mediocre artist joining in the mainstream of American literature.

Citrine combines certain elements of Bellow's other characters. The deep moral crisis in him as a result of the feeling of occupying a station in life that he does not actually deserve reminds Henderson's self estimate as a usurper. The movement of the narration from the concentration on the inner realities of the protagonist mind towards the external realities in *Humboldt's Gift* is a general pattern perceivable in *Herzog* and *Mr. Sammler's Plant.* Herzog's crisis is soon after the breaking of his second marriage, which results in a deep moral crisis. The American way of life without an ethical life force baffles Sammler and the same elements of violence, fraud and erotic sexuality haunts Citrine too. He struggles against a morally paralysing situation to protect his life as well as imagination. While Sammler is a Holocaust survivor, Citrine emerges out as an intellectual survivor.

As a literary artist, Bellow traverses the violent actualities of the American socio-cultural landscape. He deciphers the malady, catalogues the despair pervading modern existence. Despite the absurdities and the desperate scenes, Bellow reveals the possibilities of an enlightened world behind a veiled reality.

Motifs of resurrection and renewal are connected with transcendental view. To project a redeeming vision of morality, the myth of regeneration is foregrounded in the concluding chapter. This regeneration is at the psychological level though it has symbolic external manifestations as in the final scenes of *Henderson the Rain King* and *Herzog.* Citrine is finally free from the nagging distractions enforcing the artist to surrender. Emerging as a survivor and victim simultaneously, he is self-assured and is saved from the spiritual malady. Bellow's depiction of the quest of an artist for identity and immortality, transcending the distractions has universal appeal. In the search of a creative artist for a larger transcendent meaning to life, disillusions may occur. A pattern of hope and knack of accommodation liberate the Bellow protagonist from calamities. With the formation of a sense of endurance, the protagonist achieves transcendence over fear and anxiety of death. He experiences spiritual dimensions of 'death', realises the meaning of death and

comprehends the external journey of the soul. Amelioration and reconciliation are incorporated as doctrines to establish the perfectibility of man in Bellow's 'moral imaginary.' His vision of life recognises these messages of humanistic ideals.

Basic to all epiphanic moments, Citrine affirms the idea of unity in the inner universe and the mystery that veils our world. This mystery is beyond the limit of human perception and reasoning. Even the final epiphany regarding Humboldt's Gift, has the mystery of an offering from another distant dim-lit world. Citrine's final atonement is necessitated as Humboldt's reaction from the world outside establishes deep love and forgiveness from the dead.

Bellow negates the rationale of the scientific stance of death as a terminal one, and dismisses the idea of death putting an end to our existence. All Bellow protagonists frantically try to avoid and escape death. But in their relentless fight, they finally reconcile with death, and in certain instances try to transcend fear and anxiety. "Charlie Citrine comes to realise that death is not the final reality, that we are not natural but supernatural beings who continue to live on in mysterious ways that the Cartesian mind fails to understand" (Rodrigues, 1984: 97).

The possibility of Citrine's redemption is affirmed through the final trope of the crocuses. This observation of Citrine accounts for the reliability of Steiner's principle of "the need to become human in the fullest sense through observing Nature" (Steiner, 1920: 11). Nature has a revelatory function and the final message is optimistic unlike Nature appearing in an earlier instance. "A white December sky overlay the Atlantic gloom. The message of Nature seems to be that conditions were severe, that things were tough, very tough....." (*HG*, 327).

The appearance of the spring flower symbolises harmony and hope. This revelatory scene is a crowning moment of a long quest for self-discovery. Citrine is moving forward and the experiences will delight and contribute for enlightenment. The star is always there shimmering and waiting, though the path to be trodden is a hazardous one.

Affinity towards flowers is part of Citrine's meditation. Frequently he concentrates on "rosebush summoned from the past" (*HG*, 131) and glimpses the departed Humboldt, standing amidst roses. Apart from the mystical strain, the appearances of the crocuses serve as a metaphor of regeneration and redemption. "Though Humboldt's 'flowers are aborted in the bulb' (*HG*, 426) during his lifetime, Citrine's discovery of crocuses at his grave suggests another flowering of his spirit" (Braham, 1984:110).

As a symbol of rebirth the crocuses is suggestive of the reincarnation of Humboldt's soul and it also alludes to the redemption of Citrine. Spring, cloud and lilacs appear at regular intervals as metaphors of regeneration. Through these metaphors, Bellow eloquently testifies the possibility of the survival of humaneness.

The imperishable nature of the soul is overtly connected with the eternal value of art and culture. Bellow insists how intellectual dimension of art emphasizes the primacy of ideas. "The only art intellectuals can be interested in is an art which celebrates the primacy of ideas. Artists must interest intellectuals, this new class. That is why the state of culture and the history of culture become the subject matter of art" (*HG*, 32). Noble virtues can endure and flower even in a wasteland background, transcending both natural and supernatural distractions, rational and irrational forces.

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## Chapter V

## Tiresian Vision of the Holocaust Victim

The syllogistic and highly suggestive title *Mr. Sammler's Planet* functions as a metaphor in the narrative strategy of Bellow. For the excoriating flagellation of the baseness of the existing realities of human life, he projects the observations and comments of a holocaust victim as part of a direct tirade against American life. The central figure in the novel is exposed to a landscape of disorder. And the society he has to be accommodated is undergoing drastic changes. As a refugee hero, Sammler is engaged in the process of dragging the ghosts of the dead past before the present day world and is placed against a death-in-life background.

The distorted and problematic American scene of the sixties has a parallelism with the holocaust experience. The text as a whole concentrates on the tragic glory of human life, that is still on the move. The cool distanced moon is juxtaposed with the earth with its maddening revelries and sickness. But amidst this disillusionment and disintegration, as a novelist Bellow's literary voice asserts the prophetic belief in the moral perfectibility of man on this planet-earth itself.

Mr. Artur Sammler, a partially blind old Polish Jew, rescued from a refugee camp by his benevolent nephew Dr. Elya Gruner is living on the

Upper West Side of New York. From here he observes the promiscuous niece, listens to the talks about husband swapping and recalls the past personal horrors. He cherishes the London days in Woburn Square and fondles the pleasant acquaintances with the Bloomsbury. Sammler was plunged in to the infernal abyss of mass shooting, fighting and hiding during the second world war.

> When he and sixty or seventy others, all stripped naked and having dug their own grave, were fired upon and fell in. Bodies upon his own body, crushing. His dead wife nearby somewhere. Struggling out much later from weight of corpses, crawling out of the loose soil. Scraping on his belly. Hiding in a shed. Finding a rag to wear. Lying in the woods many days. (*MSP:* 75)

Along with the memories of these heroic struggling and suffering, Sammler's encounter with the Black mugger and the Indian scientist triggers further thoughts. Obsessed with the recent private fear (He had to witness a Negro Pickpocket operating on a city bus) and contempt for human escape to the moon, he is flanked by Angela and Shula, both with unattached sentiments. To this strange catalogue he has Eisen, a lunatic irresponsible sculptor as an estranged son in law. The beneficent

caretaker's son Wallace with ludicrous treasure hunting instinct is another occupant of Sammler's planet.

During the course of narration, persons, characters, ideas, incidents both historical and personal coalesce and the major incidents of three days actions are woven brilliantly with references to the past. It is not through the art of conventional telling alone, but with the art of playing with time that Bellow flashes forth the narrative by moving back and forth mixing memory and present actualities. The complexity in unfolding viewpoints can be resolved by an analysis of the actual past referents and the present incidents.

It is easy to recognize Sammler's Planet as our own earth, which is infested with animalistic instincts and impulses. Human beings, though subangelic in ethical mores, try to establish an alien culture with animal instincts and features, defiling the earth. Amidst such a beastial quoterie of personages Sammler lives and experiences the sickness of earthly existence. He is burdened with the past memories and the present realities. Very often Bellow's characters emerge as images and symbols.

> When the images of fiction have great richness of meaning, it is customary to refer to them as symbols. By now it should be apparent that there is no sharp line of demarcation between a

> symbol and any other image. Though the designation of certain images of fiction as symbols represents a partial recognition of highly significant resource of fiction, it is not without unfortunate consequences. It has tended to distract attention from the fact that in general the language of fiction functions symbolically. (Simon, 1957: 157-58)

Even situations have the force of images and they communicate the major concerns of the artist. Irving Malin analyses the beast imagery in Bellow fiction without a close scrutiny of the entire texts selected. Commenting on the beastial elements in human nature he observes. "Another crucial image in Bellow's fiction is the beast. Not only are his characters pressed, trapped, devoured, or deformed—they are turned in to animals" (Malin, 1969:104 ).

The predominant animal imagery in *Mr. Sammler's Planet* has not been rigorously analysed or interpreted. Sammler is introduced in the novel as "an explaining creature" (*MSP:*5) and in the entire contexts he is projected as an image of the intellectual man playing the role of an explaining creature. In her comparative study of *An American Dream* and *Mr. Sammler's Planet*, Susan Glickman argues that the animal imagery in "Bellow is mostly of the barnyard sort, reducing human behaviour to a

squabble in a henhouse, Mailer's focus is on the wild carnivores of jungle and desert and elevates human wickedness to something spectacular" (1982-83: 575).

But it is very obvious that Bellow also makes use of an imagery pattern in *Mr. Sammler's Planet,* which conveys the beastial nature of the human beings. The ensuing inventory of the major images negates Susan Glickman's observations.

The flight of imagination through which the narrator's experiences are paraded, argued out and sensations are created is metaphorically hinted through the image of 'soul' as a "poor bird, not knowing which way to fly" (*MSP:* 5). For a critique of the unaccommodating American scene, historical situations are translated into perceptions.

To a person with a wide range of experiences and a fabulous treasure of memories, recollections and ideas it needs a lot of concentration to focus on any particular phase of experience. The black pickpocket who appears as a recurrent stranger frightens and excites Sammler. With a face showing "the effrontery of a big animal"(*MSP:* 6) he represents the dark force of the age. "The free ways of barbarism under the protection of civilized order" (*MSP:* 8) in the "barbarus world"(*MSP:* 8) were observed by the septuagenarian protagonist through the only one

good eye as the left eye was deformed "and slightly cat-whiskered" (*MSP:* 62). This observation was "through the overhanging hairs of the brow as in some breeds of dog" (*MSP:* 6).

Bellow employs clinical imagery to focus the need of an agency to purge society from its malice. "With the touch of a doctor on a patient's belly, the Negro moved back the slope leather, turned the glided scallop catch"(*MSP:* 10). Sammler had observed "an animal movement" (*MSP:* 39) as if watching an open heart surgery. The clinical image fades away with "the thief tugged his clothes like a doctor with a clinic patient" (*MSP:* 39). The silent witness with an aching throat was racing away from the thief "like an escaping creature" (*MSP:* 40). At the same time he feels that he will not be "hunted in alley like a rat" (*MSP:* 41). He was frightened by the wordless irrational threat- "a metaphysical warrant" (*MSP:* 168) and the indecent act is artistically vulgarized through the imagery of "a snake" (*MSP:* 42) and the "fleshy mobility of an elephant's trunk" (*MSP:* 42). In the final street brawl, the ferocity of the criminal is imagistically conveyed. "Considering the Negro's strength—his crouching, squeezing intense animal pressing-power, the terrific swelling of the neck and the tightness of the buttocks as he rose on his toes. In straining alligator shoes!" (*MSP:* 231)

Sammler is trying to avoid another encounter with the Negro culprit and Feffer requests the old protagonist to tell a younger person just to avoid danger. But the old man tells Feffer how he confuses and under his influence he gets muddled. To this Feffer reacts-"You are wise, but not hip, and this cat, Mr. Sammler, sounds like a real tiger" (*MSP:* 97).

Almost all characters are assigned animal features either in their temperament or in appearance. Twisting his shoulders like an ape, Walter Bruch was "wool-haired" (*MSP:* 47) in appearance and while speaking "He gobbled, he quacked, grunted, swallowed syllables"(*MSP:* 47). Wallace was a "kinky cat" (*MSP:* 71) and Sammler in his introspection remembers how everyone is murdering everyone. "Endless literal hours in which one is internally eaten up. Eaten because coherence is lacking. Perhaps as a punishment for having failed to find coherence. Or eaten by a longing for sacredness" (*MSP:* 75).

On another occasion while Sammler was speeding along and looking for a bench he "noted a female bum drunkenly sleeping like a dugong, a sea cow's belly rising"(*MSP:* 86). This visual image is dove tailed with H.G.Well's fantasy of "Lovely young human cattle herded by the cannibalistic Morlocks who lived a subterranean life and feared light and fire" (*MSP:* 86).

The student radicals shouting against Sammler during his guest lecture at the Columbia University is compared to the spider monkeys in the trees defecating into their hands. Sammler felt distanced from his species and "the barbary ape howling" (*MSP:* 37) is not a personal insult, but a reflection of the general animalistic nature, where one could observe "the suicidal impulses of civilization pushing strongly" (*MSP:* 29).

Fanny, the girl who guided Sammler from the Lecture Hall at the university has a lover, an insurance adjuster Gus "a swinger with chimpanzee teeth" (*MSP:* 174). The unheroic astronauts who figure in the moon talk are like "Super chimpanzees" (*MSP:* 174). Wallace estimates Angela as a pig and a swine. "She's weepy about him (Horricker) today, but she's a pig and will be forgotten tomorrow. I think my sister is a swine" (*MSP:* 149).

Shula's world view is too delicate for earthly life and she wishes to transplant Sammler to her world "by animal histrionics" (*MSP:* 158). Her senses are very keen and alert. "Idiot ingenuous animal, she had ears like a fox" (*MSP:* 161).

The moon-dialogue on the prospect of colonizing moon and the subsequent changes of the earth is couched on epistemological issues like Maya Philosophy and Schopenhauerian ideas. Sammler senses the

possibility of a dark, terrible consequence of the extermination of the species. "Take a book like *The War of the Worlds.* There the Martians come to get rid of mankind. They tear our species as Americans treated the bison and other animals or for that matter the American Indians" (*MSP:* 168).

Dr.Lal was patiently listening with "the sensitivity of a hairy creature, the animal brown of his eyes, the good breeding of his attentive posture" (*MSP:* 169).

Wallace, under the illusion of a fantasy breaks the pipes in search of the thousand-dollar bills hidden by his father and floods the attic. He uses a figure of speech to designate his father. "He's (Dr.Elya Gruner) turning away from us. Or like a dog in the manger" (*MSP:* 194). Shula and Wallace are considered as "symbols of turbulence" (*MSP:* 194). While Gruner was struggling with death and sinking down, paradoxically enough Wallace was piloting a yellow Cessana plane and "he had the wolfish North Italian look" (*MSP:* 215).

Sammler who tried to condense his life experience into a testament doesn't disregard this earth as an unsuitable place for humanity. Amidst the beastiality, he often speculated: "There are still human qualities. Our

weak species fought its fear, our crazy species fought its criminality. We are an animal of genius"(*MSP:* 245).

Is it possible for a writer to think and write about only a particular set of people belonging to any specific culture or ethnicity? No culture can exist without disseminating and diffusing traits from the immediate contexts. Bellow's Jewishness also is a result of a cultural symbiosis and gleanings from various cultures, which converge to enrich a literary idiom. Human existence must have experiences and an idle life can contribute nothing to any philosophy. Bellow's characters are exposed to a vast range of strange and extraordinary experiences. "But sometimes Mr. Sammler felt that the way he saw things could not be right. His experiences had been too peculiar, and he feared that he projected peculiarities on to life. Life was probably not blameless, but he often thought that life was not and could not be what he was seeing" (*MSP:* 89).

They imbibe various ideologies after their exposure to the ordained designs of life. But finally almost all Bellow heroes realize and speak for the necessity of embracing the universe with love for humanity. The only world truly at our disposal is the one, which has already been conditioned as the abode for humanity. Sammler makes it clear that this world though unsatisfactory, cannot be abandoned. He affirms that a better world can be

created for man on this planet itself. The desire to substitute the moon for earth is not rational and the cardinal issues of society cannot be resolved on another planet. To Sammler, the utopian theorist, Dr.Govinda Lal, represents a radically different cultural tradition which is antithetical to his convictions. Apart from the symbolic significance of 'the moon dialogue' it also introduces themes and issues like the sanctity of the individual in society, human predicament in the present context, way out from the madness that humanity is exposed to and the question whether this glorious earth seems more and more a prison house with no scope for escape.

The narrative structure comprises the gradually observed and experienced events of a couple of days. Along with this, Sammler's past memories-memories of the very distant past are fragmentarily released from the memory bank. Bellow masterfully manipulated to trigger various sensibilities and different distinctive voices through internal monologues, prolonged polemical discourses, family chit-chats, meditative speculations and factual descriptions. As pointed out by Malcolm Bradbury, "the novelist impersonates through his central character" (1982: 78).

As the central figure, Sammler functions as both history and prophecy. This prophetic nature is an aspect of the Jewish element visible

in Bellow's major works of fiction. He stores experiences, gathers information from history, accumulates knowledge through vast reading and experiences the pulse of the age. As the very name 'Sammler' means 'storage battery' in German, he makes use of all these gathered experiences as materials to get power and energy to face the monstrous forces of modern technological civilization.

Though critics like Irving Howe, Max F. Schulz, Joseph Epstein and Robert Alter have tried to focus the Jewish heritage and distinctly Jewish quality of Sawl Bellow's fiction, Bellow categorically expresses his resentment. "I find the label intellectually vulgar, unnecessarily parochializing and utterly without value-especially since, from personal point of view, it avoids me both as a writer and as a Jew" (9 May, 1971: 12).

The distinctive Jewish strain traceable in *Mr. Sammler's Planet* imparts a prophetic vision and this literary imagination is in contrast with the apocalyptic. Through Sammler and Gruner, Bellow tries to define the essentially human nature in man. Ethically and also as a force of culture Sammler is able to divine the malice of the age through his observational talents. Like the central figure Harry Trellman in the recent novella *The Actual* (1997) Sammler realizes the emptiness and human gaps in city

life mainly through observations. The cityscape is a recurrent metaphor in Bellow's fictional frame to reinforce the dark romanticism and the stark realities. "The main threat in a place like Chicago is emptiness-human gaps and breaks, a sort of spiritual ozone that smells like bleach" (*A:* 4).

Sammler endorses the Shtetl faith of the existence of this world for man and his welfare when he denounces the idea of leaving the planet as a part of moon colonization. This world is created for man and our life must be lived here itself celebrating the preciousness of it. Harry Trellman shares Sammlerian sensibility in his statement- "I found ways to protect myself from this liminal threat, the threat of being sucked into outer space" (*A*: 4).

The moral intelligence of Sammler can be deciphered as a result of the accumulated rare death experiences, the unique range of scholarship and the pursuit of knowledge like a Talmud hakhem. "For he had been reading historians of civilization-Karl Marx, Max Weber, Max Scheler, Franz Oppenheimer. Side excursions into Adorno, Marcuse, Norman O. Brown, whom he found to be worthless fellows" (*MSP:* 32).

At another level, his moral stance and the moral intelligence are the result of the interaction between his Jewish experience and the pagan revelries observed by him. Sammler estimates that except Gruner, the

Ostjud Jew and the symbol of moral values, all other characters live in a world of airy-fairy nothingness—inhabit a world of fantasy. There is the primary image of Sammler's glorious planet getting defiled and tarnished by ideas and personages. Faustian aspirations, unlimited falsehoods, vulgar sex cult, obscenities and dark romanticism have become the aspects of a phenomenon which help to speed up the process of deterioration. Sammler abhors and attacks this mad sensuality, but not to surrender and leave this world for another. Amidst this carnivals of despair and militancy he is optimistic and hopes that humanity will never be devoid of the moral nature which will help and lead to ultimate triumph over the evil forces.

Future of man on Sammler's planet runs counter to the goal of advanced technology. These motifs are fused in the central symbol—the cool distanced moon. Sammleresque design assigns priority to justice on this planet which can assure humaneness, dignity and sanity. His reverence for God's will and humanitarian stance forces Sammler not to escape from this planet even though scientists like Dr. Lal aspires for an escape from the earthly prison. Human survival faces the disintegrating temper of the period. The modern angst precipitated by the decadent culture forces Sammler to search for a new mode of life style with an

affirmative note and a universal tenor. Affluence in the American context doesn't alter the humanitarian outlook of Gruner, and Sammler admires and appreciates this virtue without indulging in any sort of metaphysical justifications.

But a very pertinent observation is the inconsistency on Sammler's humanitarian outlook. He was not always entirely humane. He had to kill the German soldier for survival and at that moment of triumph over the victim, Sammler loses humaneness at least for a short span of time. "Sammler ordered the man to take off his coat. Then the tunic. The sweater, the boots. After this, he said to sammler in a low voice, 'Nicht Schiessen'. He asked for his life.... Sammler saw the soil already sprinkled on his face. He saw the grave on his skin" (*MSP:* 112).

The ritual slaughtering must be viewed as part of Sammler's peculiar experiences. Of course there are obvious unavoidable, inescapable and insufferable things, which are beyond human control and they had to be endured. The irony operating behind this shift in his character will be clear how he was rescued while hiding in the mausoleum by Old Cieslakiewicz, the peacetime caretaker of the cemetery who risked his life to save Sammler. In the course of narration Bellow justifies. "But sometimes Mr. Sammler felt that the way he saw things could not be

right. His experience had been too peculiar, and he feared that he projected peculiarities on to life. Life was probably not blameless, but he often thought that life was not and could not be what he was seeing" (*MSP:* 89).

Dr. Elya Gruner, the archetype of goodness symbolizes dignity and sanity, which are fast disappearing from the Sammlerian world of values. To Chirantan Kulshrestha "it would be incorrect to assume that Sammler idealises Gruner" (1978: 136). But this observation negates the real role of Gruner as a moral man and survivor. Dr. Elya Gruner, had rescued Shula and her father from a D.P Camp immediately after the war. This idealization is echoed even in the beginning of the novel. "Because Arnold (Elya) Gruner had Old World family feelings. And studying the lists of refugees in the Yiddish papers he had found the name of Artur and Shula Sammler" (*MSP*:11). This earth is identified and considered by the seventy plus hero as his planet and asserts that "In short if the earth deserves to be abandoned, if we are now to be driven streaming into other worlds, starting with the moon, it is not because of the likes of you" (*MSP:* 70).

Another serious dichotomy is the violation of Bellow's own cautioning against the tendency of deep readers indulging in symbol

hunting. 'Seeing' and 'thinking' are linked with experiences and they acquire the dimension of themes. While Sammler was hidden in a mausoleum during war time in Poland, he turned,

> To the external world for curious ciphers and portents. The dead life of that summer and into autumn when he had been a portent watcher, and very childish, for many larger forms of meaning had been stamped out, and a straw, or a spider thread, or a stain, a beetle or a sparrow had to be interpreted. Symbols everywhere, and metaphysical messages. (*MSP:* 73)

In the family tomb of Mezvinski, Sammler remained as a boarder exposed to the yellow light in the sky which again symbolizes decay and unpleasantness. "In this light, bad news for Sammler, bad news for humankind, bad information about the very essence of being was diffused" (*MSP:* 74).

Lionel Feffer who has a protective instinct toward Sammler, venerates him as a surrogate father figure. He has detected the prophetic proclivity in Sammler. Feffer announces. "I know that you are trying to condense what you know, your life experience into a Testament" (*MSP:*92).

Most of Bellow's stories are not deliberately loaded so heavily with moral sentiments. They are accounts of actual occurrences and as such chronicles the dissolution and discontentment of modern existence. From the psychological point: "As a member of a species with a primitive tendency towards aggression, every man must expect a certain amount of harsh treatment from his fellows" (Simon, 1957: 26). While Herzog's suffering is a sort of psychological dilemma, Sammler is exposed to a landscape of visible physical disorder and the rapid procession of images communicate the structure of a society in which he has to accommodate himself.

The bursting of the water pipe on the attic and the subsequent flooding is a symbolic one anticipating the imminent death of Elya Gruner due to arterial bulge in the brain. "It was a metaphor for Elya's condition. In connection with that condition there arose other images" (*MSP:* 207). Gruner's affliction of aneurysm metaphorically alludes to the transformation of the external scene into a symbolic map of death. The landscape of disorder recognizable in the novel is a reflection of the American massed society confronted by an outsider.

The narrative strategy employed is third person mode of narration with occasional intrusion of the first person point of view. The point of

view in the narrative is created through empirical narrative employed in biography in which the historical impulse is dominated. And as such, Sammler's reminiscing has a historical colouring recording the major trends and tribulations of an era. And this historical experience is the springboard for the philosophical tenor traceable in the novel.

The theme of 'Observing' in *Mr. Sammler's Planet* and *The Dean's December* can be analysed within the social and cultural contexts of the texts. Both of the central characters are annoyed by the crime and plain cruelty unleashed in the modern vulgarised society. Albert Corde, the dean of students at a Chicago University, being a journalist was a sort of a professional observer, where as Sammler's observations were necessitated by chance experiences.

Elya Gruner's aneurysm, apart from other connotation already listed in this chapter, is a symbolic suggestion of the possible breakdown of earth and his collapse alienates Sammler as Gruner's role through out was that of a consoling benefactor and a man of good intention. With the death of Gruner, it is evident that Sammler's microcosmic world has become more dreary and unaccommodating. "At his best this man was much kinder than at my very best I have ever been or could ever be" (*MSP:* 251-52).

The controversy between religious spiritualism and science is projected as a theme through the ideological conflict of Sammler and Govinda Lal, the biophysicist from Punjab. Though an apolitical novel, the polemical discourse introduces the theme of confrontation of ideologies, between spiritualism and rationalism.

Sammler's attitude and comments endorse himself at a mystic level and Prof. Lal with rational and scientific orientation is at loggerheads with the already established American image of an Indian. This role reversal technique is to contrast the temperamental shift of the two diverse cultures. India, blessed with a vibrant mythology and glorious cultural repository has the traditional image as a land of sages and mystics. It is also viewed "as a way station on the road to nirvana" (Wirth, 1979: 69).

This cultural elegance of a race is reversed and deconstructed through the induction of Lal as a purely rational guru of biophysics. The present trends in science and religion may have positive values, but there is always the apprehension of the emergence of a disorganized society. There must be certain ceilings to the religious and scientific establishments. These two forces must not be reduced to the level of idols of worship. Sammler's private fear is that this world may certainly become bleak unless there is a ceiling. When Wallace talks to uncle

Sammler about taking reservations for moon excursions, Sammler informs that his travels are over:

> I seem to be a depth man rather than a height man. I do not personally care for the illimitable. The ocean, however deep, has a top and bottom, whereas there is no sky ceiling. I think I am an oriental, Wallace. Jews after all, are orientals. I am content to sit here on the West Side, and watch, and admire these gorgeous Faustian departures for the other worlds. Personally I require a ceiling, although a high one. Yes. I like ceilings, and the high better than the low. (*MSP:* 147)

This spiritually inclined disposition is rooted on an ethical background, which ensures that this world can be changed and it is possible to materialize the dream of peace.

Wallace, who was loony often seemed to be in outer space, appreciated uncle Sammler's wit while others apparently treated Sammler as a symbol. Different personas were fused into his psychic frame—priest and judge. "It was the Sammler's who kept on vainly trying to perform some kind of symbolic task. The main result of which was unrest, exposure to trouble. Mr. Sammler had a symbolic character. He, personally was a symbol" (*MSP:* 75).

Rootlessness and non-belongingness as dominant issues of the modern human situations are assessed through the unconnectedness of Dr.Elya Gruner's children versus the sentimental attachment of the doctor. Gruner's strong family feeling and the life long attachment to the past European days are absent in his children.

Wallace, who does not honour roots in family ties is for flying high and his craze for the moon shot is symbolically communicated through the act of flying the Cessna plane injuring the beholder's eyes and the noise attacking the skull. The sickness of the youth is brilliantly presented through the startling image of a clear yellow coloured bird's bill. Simultaneously Elya Gruner, who always "preferred downstairs"(*MSP:* 250) was waiting in the hospital for his final assignment. "He was aware that he must meet, and he did meet – through all the confusion and degraded clowning of this life through which we are speeding – he did meet the terms of his contract" (*MSP:* 252).

These mental whisperings of Sammler have the cadence of a prayer celebrating the glory of Elya's earthly existence. Gruner's hyperactive son Wallace appreciated uncle Sammler's witticisms and apparently treated the old man as a symbol. Circumstances pressed Sammler to witness and experience strange things whereas Wallace wanted to examine people

deliberately. The involuntary inolvement of Wallace is part of the design of seeing and experiencing. "He (Wallace) wanted to examine peoples in various stages of development" (*MSP:* 77). As the septuagenarian holocaust victim, Sammler's disenchantment continues with wider American experiences. He is specifically translated into a symbol. "Assigned to figure out certain things, to condense, in short views, some essense of experience, and because of this having a certain wizardry ascribed to him" (*MSP:* 220).

In spite of the humiliations faced and the collapse of civilization, he argues. "There are still human qualities. Our weak species fought its fear, our crazy species fought its criminality. We are an animal of genius" (*MSP:* 245).

It is this cardinal belief which makes him to observe that the world is not going to end. To be born human is not a natural gift. "Every body's human only in some degree. Some more than others"(*MSP:* 244).

Sammler's rationale insisted to realise the madness of things, which deeply affected him. "The persistence, the maniacal push of certain ideas, themselves originally stupid, stupid ideas that had lasted for centuries. this is what drew the most curious reactions from him" (*MSP:* 115). This

observing philosopher has noticed a kind of impunity in society and no one bothered what happened.

Possessiveness is treated as a theme and the narrator's voice declares that "Possessive emotions are in a transitional phase" (*MSP:* 197). While Angela has no sentiment about the old homestead, Wallace does not really like connections with his house. "Roots? Roots are not modern. That's a peasant conception, soil and roots. Peasantry is going to disappear" (*MSP:* 197).

Sammler with "only one good eye" (*MSP:* 5) and with "the face of a British Museum reader" (*MSP:* 7) is a modern Tiresias exposed to both societal and personal horrors and his vision is the central consciousness of the novel. What the septuagenarian protagonist sees and exposed to are the recognizable dilemma of the creatures that occupy Mr. Sammler's planet. This planet has the ceilings between the hyper-civilized Byzantine luxury and the barbarous world of darker patterns. A central paradox operating in the text as context is the conflict between Apolonian serenity and Dionysian revelry. Sammler symbolizes the Apolonian serenity and restrained calmness, whereas the society or context explicitly indulged in mad revelries is a metaphor for the Dionysian revelry.

The reality instructors, a recurrent image in Bellow's fiction, together with the pleasure seeking pepsi generation appear in the novel with various assurances of a perfect human society. They go on explaining everything without understanding anything and suffer due to a myopic vision. Sammler was much offended to hear and "had seen things he didn't want to see" (*MSP:* 57).

Sammler's life, like the life lived, enjoyed or suffered by human beings, contained several separate lives. He was the persecuted and also the persecutor at least for a couple of moments. Another role is that of an occasionally dangling and inconsistent guru and disciple. He has been a keen observer and the observed, a listener and a commentator, a sufferer and a sage and ultimately a father and a surrogate figure frustrated by humiliations, still determined not to abandon his planet.

The inhabitants of this planet are "turning former respectability inside out" (*MSP:* 9) and trying to justify idleness, silliness, lust and distemper. But there seems little chance of discarding this earthly abode, as humanity has still something to assure. Though he is well enlightened by Dr. Lal regarding the perfect society on the moon, Sammler is ready to remain here itself taking stock of the horrors and humiliations he had experienced. There is no chance of escaping from the continuing horrors

and the cultural degeneracy. He remembers things of the past and divines the madness that is yet to be released.

Passengers with "zero instincts, no grasp of New York" (*MSP:* 10) have become easy victims of criminals like the Black Negro. Sammler-Negro encounter throws light on the conspiracy between science and social agencies. He actually wanted to report a pickpocket on the Riverside Bus. But the telephone—a scientific gadget and an agency of modern technology and the police force—a symbol of social set up established to protect society and maintaining order, miserably fail to help a duty bound citizen.

"Tensely sitting forward in bright lamplight, Artur Sammler like a motorcyclist who has been struck in the forehead by a pebble from the road, trivially stung, smiled with long lips. America!" (*MSP:* 13)

If one puts this symbolic significance of the collapse of scientific gadgets to establish order and discipline in society against the crazy idea of colonizing the moon, it is evident that our ventures will prove to be exercises in futility. Black man and the Police appear as recurring icons with functional meaning as well as translated meaning in the cultural representation. The Black race is associated with evil deeds and destruction, while the functional meaning in the narrative is that of a

savage criminal. The American Police force functioning as an agent of law and order has the functional meaning of controlling violence.

Physicians made sexual gestures to their patients and "joined the age" (*MSP:* 130). Even the municipal judge from Chicago indulged in sophisticated sex at Acapulco. Establishments representing the protective agencies fail to shield the sanctity, and defile society.

With the technique of incorporating 'ideas' as themes, Bellow tries to construe an ideological frame. Conspiracy as an idea has become the fashion of the day and even the sacredness of life is thwarted. "The best and purest human beings, from the beginning of time, have understood that life is sacred. To defy that old understanding is not banality. There was a conspiracy against the sacredness of life. Banality is the adopted disguise of a very powerful will to abolish conscience" (*MSP:* 17).

Pastoral landscape and the elements of nature act as restorative forces in Bellow. The pastoral excursion of Sammler is juxtaposed with the urban milieu. Herzog, at moments of distress, conducts mental journeys, seeking solace in nature. In his desperate search for stillness in life, Herzog often seeks shelter in the pastoral elegance of nature. "When he opened his eyes in the night, the stars were near like spiritual bodies.

Fires, of course; gases-minerals, heat, atoms, but eloquent at five in the morning to a man lying in a hammock wrapped in his overcoat" (*H:* 7).

Joseph in *Dangling Man* (1944) through his diary presents the cyclical seasonal symbolism pointing out the brilliance of nature. The poetic description of Sammler's first visit to the Holy Land, with the smoothness of the colour and "the blue water, unusually dense, heavy, seemed sunk under the naked Syrian heights. Mr. Sammler's heart was very much torn by feelings as he stood under the short, leaf-streaming banana trees" (*MSP:* 23) reminds him England's green mountains in serpentine nakedness.

Gradually his memory filters through the Bloomsbury days in Woburn Square and the high connections with the "cultural best of England" (*MSP:* 24). But finally, living with broader and wider experiences, Sammler realizes, "Dark romanticism now took hold" (*MSP:* 28).

Juxtaposition of the contraries imparts a satiric vein rather than an elegiac tone to the novel. The sublime parents (Mr. Sammler and Dr. Elya Gruner) are placed along with the ridiculous children. Serene elegance is juxtaposed with vulgar obscenity, escapism with affirmation and ultimately the cool distanced moon with the sinful earth.

Mr Sammler, almost like an old hermit was often shocked to hear listen the intimate sexual reports couched in a confessional tone. While H. G. Wells talked about sexual passion, Angela narrated her first meeting with Wharton Horricker. He could identify the suicidal impulses of civilization, the crazy sexual indulgence, violent dreams and erotic persuasions. While elements of dark culture were traced in Shula Slawa, to the Columbia University Students he was a guru. He was interested in the radical movement of the students. The intellectual pursuit began with the reading of the historians of civilization—Karl Marx, Max Weber, Max Scheler, Franz Oppenheimer, Adorno, Marcuse, Ortega etc. Finally culminated in concentrating on religious writers like Suso, Tauler, Meister Eckhardt and the Bible.

> In his seventies he was interested in little more than Meister Eckhardt and the Bible. For this he needed no readers. He read Eckhardt's Latin at the public library from microfilm. He read the sermons and the Talks of Instruction—a few sentences at a time-a paragraph of Old German-presented to his good eye at close range. (*MSP:* 32)

The saddening and highly regrettable Columbia University incident in which the old scholar was humiliated, hooted and insulted forces him to

a sort of self evaluation and feels that he is "somewhat separated from the rest of his species" (*MSP:* 37). Those university students were adjudged as comical and acting without dignity and the modern campus culture is being scandalized. "They had no view of the nobility of being intellectuals and judges of the social order" (*MSP:* 39).

Sexual madness of the western world is one aspect of the vision patterned in the novel. This realisation forces the narrator to comment on the ugly and odious glory of a society with sexual perversions. Sexual sophistication dominates the cultural scene. Sammler's niece is promiscuous and indulges in talks about a swapping incident in Acapulco. After listening to the stupid performance of the professional, the old man doubts. "And I can't really say what it's all about. Is it may be some united effort to conquer disgust? Or to show that all the repulsive things in history are not so repulsive?" (*MSP:* 128).

Angela Gruner feels free with old Sammler to blurt out statements with sexual overtones. Feffer, the bustling, eruptive busy seducer of young wives symbolizes the "high energy American life to the point of anarchy and breakdown" (*MSP:* 33). Uncle Sammler's aversion for these perversions occasionally takes him to the moon visions. "At moments like this Mr. Sammler was more than ever pleasantly haunted by moon visions.

Artemis-lunar chastitiy"(*MSP:* 55). A totally different condition in moon is visualized and this does not testify to the dangling nature of Sammler. There seemed to be no question of leaving the earth in search of better devices and alternate humane conditions.

Exposed to various crises, demonic violence, historical incidents and the sickness of the age, Sammler identifies the defects of society. Simultaneously he appreciates and enjoys the gratitude of the benefactors and sincerely craves for a social patterning. "In short, if the earth deserves to be abandoned, if we are now to be driven streaming in to other worlds, starting with the moon, it is not because of the likes of you, Sammler would have said" (*MSP:* 70).

Bellow's fiction has a set pattern in which the protagonist, often an extraordinary personage at a crisis moment indulges in a sort of mental sketching of the extraordinary life experiences. Similar to the technique employed in Browning's Dramatic monologues. Bellow heroes indulge in the process of soul dissection, with an unfriendly society as the backdrop. In these interior monologues, fantasy, memory and ideas constantly revolve and acquire symbolic dimensions.

Through the thought process of a single mind, Bellow establishes the possibility of attaining a perfect society on the moon. The black

pickpocket with the animal instinct symbolizes the primitive, violent and sexual aspects of the modern criminal world. The blackman's message or symbolic irrational warning is not to become a saviour of society. Sammler divines himself. "Of course he and the pickpocket were different. Everything was different. Their mental, characterological, spiritual profiles were miles apart" (*MSP:* 54).

Dr. Elya Gruner, the embodiment of all values cherished and honoured by Sammler appears also as a symbol of dependability. His death due to aneurysm of the brain symbolizes the death of old world values. On his third day quest, though Sammler sped along the way to see Elya Gruner at his deathbed, Sammler failed to see him alive. Just before his arrival he had to witness the horrible scene of violence—the collapse of the Negro pickpocket in a clash in the street. This incident again shows that the world often gets in his way just to prevent obligations. He felt disappointed, as he couldn't show the moral obligation of a final exchange of words with his benefactor. Spiritually inclined Sammler's philosophical consolation is that as we have our assignments, Elya's assignments as a husband, medical man and family man were successful.

Sammler's Halcyon days in London is a metaphorical reference to civilization opposed to that of the Dark Romanticism visible in the present

phase at New York. This multicultural exposure sharpens the intellectual fabric and enables the hero to formulate a philosophy of life based on an Apolonian order opposed to that of the obscene flux of the Dionysian element of the contemporary scene. This direction towards human concerns is without any pronounced political alignment.

Unlike Herzog and Citrine, Sammler is not locked into any sort of relationship with a dominating wife or an unfriendly companion. But the society superimposed is one with disintegrated moral codes, and unfortunately no remedy has been suggested by the novelist to challenge and protest against the attitude of the society which flirts with filthy excess.

To Sammler, moon shot and human colonization of the moon do not represent man's attempt to reduce space or unraveling a mystery. The darker aspects and forces of society, which symbolize perversion, disturb Sammler's mental equilibrium. He confides how to some people experience seemed wealth and horrors fortune. Sammler never entertained such riches but he was there "to be pounded back and forth so abnormally on the courts, like a ball between powerful players" (*MSP:* 114).

The agents in the post holocaust world like the Germans and the Poles, the indifferent New York police department, Black Negro

Pickpocket who threatened him to death, the virtuous Gruner, the promiscuous niece Angela, the eccentric daughter Shula, the easily excitable Indian Professor Lal, the American Student radicals, Lionel Feffer the opportunistic young friend with tales of bed room adventures and Bruch with the nauseating descriptions of the fleshy Puerto Rican Women's arms are the reality instructors to enlighten, shock and frustrate Sammler.

Instead of a cultural symbiosis on earth itself, Dr. Lal, the Hindu Indian professor dreams of a perfect society on the moon. The main objective of the Indian professor and Mr. Sammler is the attainment of a perfect society. Expected to be more spiritually oriented and keen on Indian way of thinking Dr. Lal's distopian idea of colonizing the moon seems ludicrous to Mr. Sammler who is infact an elder sage. The vision of a perfect society is the main signifier and the central concern. But they have opposite viewpoints. This paradox operating behind the antithetical and ambivalent moral stance of the protagonist is actually the conflict between the oriental and the occidental attitude towards human life.

The serious issue or fashion of a sort of disowning one's own culture and tradition just to embrace an alien one can be deciphered in the moon dialogue. Dr. Lal recognizes and acknowledges the elegance and

supremacy of the American way of thinking as par excellence, while Sammler identifies it as sickness and madness even though he is a part of it. His eastward view recognizes a civilization protecting barbarism. This role reversal technique of Bellow points to the current fashion of the American image of India as a land of yogic culture and meditation and the Indian image of America as a technological wonder-lab.

Sammler's observations and experiences have a mythical texture. Like Tiresias, the world confronted by Sammler provides him new sensations and fresh insights. Each moment was a new experience to him and Bellow accounts how he was forced to crawl from his own grave to escape the holocaust horror. Strangely enough the poor old man was entangled in a never ending relay race of horrors from which he could not escape.

Human species is viewed as strange and brilliant capable of wheeling this globe with one half awake and the other half sleeping. Past memories are contrasted with the present preoccupations of mind and significant thematic conclusions are logically argued out. The sequence of three days events on which the entire narratology revolves also concentrates on moral values and spirituality as major thematic concerns. Obviously, the spiritual and the Schlemiel instincts force Sammler to hate

the notion of "launching from this planet to another" (*MSP:* 222). He feels that the escape from this "death-burdened, rotting, spoiled, sullied, exasperating, sinful earth" (*MSP:* 223) is not a desirable one for humanity. The metaphoric title is to reinforce the desirability and necessity of facing the ultimate realities of life on this planet itself. Bellow's 'moral imaginary'—vision of life realises the possibility of a serene earth free from maddening revelries and sickness. Sammler is the perfect embodiment of human virtues and the moral world of Bellow's fiction abounds in benevolent characters like Henderson, Herzog, Citrine and Sammler. They contribute a lot to illumine Bellow's concept of 'moral imaginry'—his vision of life which is positive and life affirming. A perfect society is attainable on this planet itself provided one acknowledges the values cherished by individuals like Elya Gruner and Artur Sammler. Through the moral perfectibility of man, this earth could be converted into the only desirable haven—the single planet cum home of Man.

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# Chapter VI

## From Disorder to Harmony and Reconciliation

As a novelist Bellow is not a non-conformist. Almost all Bellow protagonists move from disorder to harmony and eventually reconcile with the existing social norms. They affirm the dignity of the individual, though the context in society is degenerative. This sultrifying feature of society in the present American context is interrelated with the theme of humanistic value. Regarding the disintegrating forces of the American city, Malcolm Bradbury makes the following observations:

> As a novelist he (Saul Bellow) encounters an urban, mechanical massed world–in which the self may be ironized, displaced or sapped by dominant processes and the laws of social placing, where victimization is real, and the assertion of self and the distillation of an act of will or a humanistic value is a lasting problem. (1982:25)

An intensified moral vision with a pronounced tirade against the demoralising factors is explicit in the Bellow oeuvre. Bellow consistently expresses his resentment towards contemporary American literature, which fondles despair, disillusionment, pessimism and demoralising ideas. In a lecture under the auspices of the Gertrude Clarke Whittal Poetry and

Literature Fund, Bellow makes an assessment of the current despair dominated literature. He observes that the American novels are filled with complaints over the misfortunes of the sovereign self. Writers have inherited the tone of bitterness from the master poems and the great novels of this century. The nihilistic attitude of the writer is to scorn contemporary life (Bellow, 1963:22-29).

Bellow's imagination is conditioned by psychological tenor, moral stance and religious sentiments. The introspective psychic journey of Herzog and the visible geographical adventures of Henderson account for the psychological tenor. Moral anxiety and intellectual conflicts are the central motive forces in the survivor novels, *Herzog* and *Mr. Sammler's Planet.* The struggle between the world of distractions and the inner world is presented with a spiritual dimension in *Humboldt's Gift.* A multi-layered vision is mirrored through various metaphors like crocuses, cannibalism, fire trucks, ambulances and spiritual clothing. Bellow also illustrates how human beings can be saved from the death of soul by transcending the world of distractions. Even the title is metaphoric and the antagonist is a foregrounded item. It is a deviation from the normal Bellow paradigm.

His search for humanity and the morally stranded individual's quest for happiness are placed against such a background. Bellow has known the American life from so close that he is also capable of detaching himself to facilitate a real account of the American life. Intimacy and objectivity go hand in hand in Bellow's delineation of American reality. Ada Aharoni claims elements of radical humanism as the special feature of Bellow's introspective fiction (1995:72-79). Bellow's humanistic concern and moralistic stance help him to trace the positive potential of man. He speaks of the moral question:

> In what form shall life be justified. That is the essence of the moral question. We call a writer moral to the degree that his imagination indicates to us how we may answer naturally without strained arguments, with a spontaneous, mysterious proof that has no need to argue with despair. (Bellow, 1963:62)

Bellow's concept of the salvation of the protagonist subscribes to the negation of dark pessimism and wasteland despair. "Bellow's protagonists are concerned with freedom of choice, social responsibility, the life-style of a good man, and the preservation of human individuality and uniqueness" (Goldman, 1983:223). Bellow's novels celebrate the

termination of one kind of existence and the willing acceptance of an optimistic and mellowed transcendental existence. Alienated Joseph in *Dangling Man* (1944) finally moves towards accommodation by choosing the army induction as his career. Asa Leventhal's awareness of human limitations in *The Victim* (1947) along with Augies's optimistic refusal to continue a disappointed life in *The Adventures of Augie March* (1953) affirm the enlightened nature of the protagonists. The transformed vision of Henderson and the matured complacent Herzog's reconciliatory progression towards "a divine illumination" (*H*, 160) are part of Bellow's positive vision of life. The moralist Sammler holds the view that one can appreciate the glory of human life only if there is a state of communication with the world around the individual. In an interview with the Yale University English majors arranged by Robert Penn Warren, published in *Life* magazine Bellow comments: "May be civilization is dying, but it still exists, and meanwhile we have our choice: we can either rain more blows on it, or try to redeem it" (1970:57).

Citrine's movement towards the spiritual and regenerative, from evil, death, squalor and clutter ultimately salvages him. Humboldt's gift, a legacy is also an emphatic declaration of the nobility of humaneness, the presence of an innate flame of humanity despite the malice, jealousy,

frustration and humiliation. "Bellow rejects an amoral universe; for him, such a world would be too cruel and chaotic" (Mannis, 1997:33). Henderson, Herzog, and Humboldt progress towards expectations. All these protagonists with rehabilitated selves and purgatorial experiences finally emerge as strong affirmers. They return to life with greater determination. Bellow protagonists transcend the morbid fear and the obsession of death. They move from disorder to harmony and reconciliation and are ultimately placed in "peace and clarity" (Opdahl, 1979:17).

Citrine realises the rejuvenatory and redemptive value of his friend's gift. It transforms him at spiritual level and establishes a significant connection with the immortal dead. Through the spiritual quest, Citrine discovers that life is immortal, purposive and meaningful. The spiritual awakening in Citrine culminates in an equipoise and the transcendence helps the protagonist to realise the infinitely precious bond of friendship and love.

With emotive overtones, symbols and metaphoric dimensions, a moral world is formulated. Abraham Chapman tries to depict Bellow heroes as spiritual activists and divine figures (1967: 258 – 98). The concept of Man as a noble and holy mystery is central to the understanding

of the Bellow canon and "he sees the novel as a fundamental mode of humane enquiry" (Bradbury, 1982:11). Sammler endorses the shtetl faith of the existence of this world for man and his welfare when he denounces the idea of leaving this planet just to colonise moon. This earth is created for man and our life must be lived here itself celebrating the preciousness of it. The moral intelligence concretized and embodied is out of the accumulated rare experiences of the protagonists. The war experiences and the wide range of Sammler's scholarly pursuit convert him into a symbol. He is fully aware of the social, scientific and historical ideas operating behind the crisis of an age. Sammler outlives a modern apocalypse and transcends to emerge as a "Jeremiah of an unhappy age" (Kumar, 1981:67). Bellow was emotionally sensitive and overanxious about the contamination of the moon with the filthy excess of earth. This worry over the moral defilement of the planet is explicit in the initial title of the novel "The Future of the Moon" instead of *Mr. Sammler's Planet.*

Herzog is perplexed with intellectual splendour and the novel is clearly a case study of a modern man caught up in the confusion of an urban society. As observed by Robert F. Kiernan, Bellow has "succeeded in reproducing and conveying the fundamental texture of subjective reality

in its most inwardness, its ambiguity, thus giving us one of the deepest and truest insights into modern man" (1989: 59 – 60).

Both Sammler and Herzog belong to the tradition of talmud hakhem. These life long students assert the value of human life honoring the fundamental assumptions of the Mitzvah system and the concept of Ol malkhut shamayim–the kinship of heaven achieved through the acceptance of the obligations of the talmudic laws, both written and oral.

Henderson's adventures have the overtones of a fantasy as his African Safari symbolises the individual's quest for a new world free from worse and complicated situations. Chirantan Kulshrestha assesses that the intellectual resonance of the Bellow oeuvre "results from the fusion of the prosocial, ethical and religious strands of contemporary thought" (1978: 54). Along with philosophical themes and psychological depth, his vision is enriched by all contemporary thought currents. "No American writer since the war has given us a level-headed, vibrant and true a description of contemporary life as Saul Bellow" (Fuchs, 1992:3). Through an enlarged and enlightened vision, Bellow asserts man's greatness and dignity in a world gone out of control. A transparent moral obviousness is present in an inclusive form.

The evils and ills of the society are well documented, yet as an affirmist Bellow is optimistic and emphatically declares the human potential which cannot be doomed. The veil of Maya and the distractors in the guise of Reality Instructors may distort and falsify the reality. But the veil is lifted through the process of enlightenment and the ultimate realisation transforms the protagonists as enlightened sufferers. The innate love for mankind and the assertion of the moral perfectibility of man on this earth itself is evident in his Nobel Lecture. Bellow fully supports the views of Josph Conrad and holds that "art attempts to find in the universe, in matter as well as in the facts of life, what is fundamental, enduring, essential" (1977:67). This attitude is reflected through the motifs and symbology. Themes like bastardization of art and literature, the American decadent culture without dignity and sanity and the sterile landscape both at psychic and physical levels reinforce the prophetic warning of a creative artist.

And it is in such an atmosphere of crime and violence that Bellow foresees an escape from a destructive malice. Gilbert M. Porter considers Bellow as "unquestioningly one of our best novelists" (1974: 196) and points out how "Bellow has clearly committed himself in his fiction to the cause of celebration, reaffirming like transcendentalists before him, the

human possibilities of the dream despite the power of the dread" (Porter, 1974: 196–97).

Individuals have to strive hard and society may be antagonistic. But the Bellow protagonist never wants to separate himself from the community. "His novels significantly confront the problem of an individual's survival in modern society 'avoiding' the absurdity of empty rebellion" (Kunitz, 1965:158). Injustices, persecutions and humiliations are agencies for illuminating the heroes in their relentless fight against adverse forces. Often they are forced to become victims of societal issues. Earl Rovit points out that "Bellow's protagonists seem to be laboring under immense loads and pressures from which they receive only momentary release" (1967:11). But this momentary release itself transforms them as enlightened personages. They are no more cynical or embittered. Revenge is replaced by redemption, rebellion by reconciliation and annihilation by regeneration. Those virtually crucified and isolated individuals have a Bellovian resurrection through the process of suffering.

This pattern constitutes an important layer of the 'moral imaginary'. The 'moral imaginary' in Bellow's fictional landscape is achieved through a synchronization of the ideas of Lacan, Paul de Man, Lemert and Freud.

But in the Bellow canon, the spiritual and the highly individualistic register a unique moral layer. Ideas like altruism, amelioration and selfrealisation are part of the moral imaginary—the vision of life presented, both consciously and unconsciously.

This moral imaginary which is tantamount to the vision of life is formulated after a series of stages. These stages consist of experiences and observations. Bellow fabricates ideas. It exists in several combinations, which emerges as images and props. This tram of symbols telescopes Bellow's vision of life 'moral imaginary', consisting of the moral ideas, codes and ethics. The rich deversity of images, experimentation in style and technique and the altruistic spirit ultimately results in the formation of a highly individualistic spiritual plaque of Bellow.

Bellow's world view enforces him to scrutinize the inherent goodness in an individual. Instead of a misanthropic content, as a disguised moralist he celebrates human accountability. As a result Bellow's novels radiate compassion. This positive potentiality of man is exemplified in "Writer as a Moralist" by raising the argument regarding the relation between a writer and of the question of moral issues. "In what form shall life be justified. That is the essence of the moral question. We call a writer moral to the degree that his imagination indicates to us how

we may answer naturally without strained arguments, with a spontaneous, mysterious proof that has no need to argue with despair" (Bellow, 1963: 62).

Bellow warns against deep reading and expresses his strong disgust for novels of abstractions when humanity is in need of concreteness and meaning. His fiction paradoxically deviates from the many doctrines and literary ideas pronounced by Bellow in his interviews and articles. He continues to object vehemently the Jewish label, though his imagination as well as the aesthetic sensibility is essentially and unmistakably Jewish. Another paradox is the metaphoric dimension of the Bellow fiction which abounds in symbols and images, demanding a deep reading. But the author cautions the readers only to contradict and mislead. Even the names of the key figures like Sammler and Herzog have symbolic connotations. The allegorical dimension of *Henderson the Rain King* also combines ideas from anthropology and psychology. Thus it is obvious that very often Bellow communicates in a language which "effortlessly conceals many things from conscious awareness, at the same time that it communicates them to the unconscious with extraordinary vividness" (Simon, 1967:175).

The image of modern man as a crucified and isolated individual is projected as the antihero. The antihero's acts are justified by himself while the hero's acts are sanctified by the society. They finally acknowledge that injustices are inescapable and unavoidable part of existence. Henderson dashes back to society after encountering the primitive powers in Africa just to assume human qualities and to be a part of a society deserted earlier. The suffering joker Herzog with mismanaged experiences and incoherent memories undergoes deep pain resulting in nobility. Sammler, the strict follower of humanistic values craves for a world of order and beauty in his own planet. A spiritually awakened Citrine looks forward to a world draped in spirituality, and succeeds in the flight from death. All of them are finally released from angst and are on the way to a world of radiance.

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